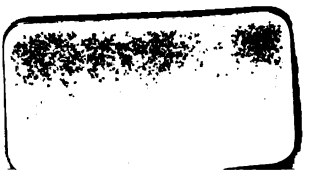

CAISTER CASTLE.

CAISTER CASTLE.

DISTANT VIEW FROM THE SOUTH EAST.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY

OF

CAISTER CASTLE,

NEAR YARMOUTH;

Including Biographical Notices

OF

SIR JOHN FASTOLFE

AND OF

DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS

OF

THE PASTON FAMILY.

ILLUSTRATED BY PLATES FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS.

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M DCCCXLII.

CHARLES SLOMAN,
PRINTER,
GREAT YARMOUTH.

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

... the inconspicuous tenements around it; and, in the grey hue of its flint masonry, affords but a dull contrast to the red brick and slate of the houses above which it rises. Of the eight hundred individuals that constitute the population of the village, the greater part draw their

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

CAISTER CASTLE.

THE village of Caister, situated upon the extreme eastern edge of the sandy shore of Norfolk, at three miles distance from Yarmouth in a northerly direction, has long been celebrated for the beauty of its ruined Castle, and for the historical interest which attaches to these remains.

Neither in the vicinity of Caister, nor in the aspect of the village itself, is there any thing picturesque to attract or to detain attention. The coast is bleak and barren; and the low sand-banks which skirt the shore are covered only with scanty vegetation; while the few trees that have found a tenure in the soil turn their backs upon the east, bending their stems and spreading their branches inland, as if they shrank from the keen blasts which come sweeping over the expanse of ocean. The square-towered church, of little ornament, forms a group with the inconspicuous tenements around it; and, in the grey hue of its flint masonry, affords but a dull contrast to the red brick and slate of the houses above which it rises. Of the eight hundred individuals that constitute the population of the village, the greater part draw their

subsistence from the neighbouring ocean; and the men pass half their life on its bosom. Fishing and agriculture divide the toils of the cottagers: when once the seasons of the mackerel and herring fisheries are over, the Caister boatman draws up his little skiff upon a dry nook of the shore, lays aside his weatherproof jacket, his "storm-cap," and all the rough accoutrements of that life whose vicissitudes he has been braving, and puts his hand to the plough and the spade, until returning spring brings back the plentiful sustenance with which the salt waters then abound.

The three miles of country between Yarmouth and Caister present an aspect as unbroken and level as the opposite coast of Holland, or as the intervening ocean. It is a green expanse, covered, on the side nearest the sea, with little heaving bushes of furze, bright and fragrant in their season with golden flowers. In the direction of the west, more inland, it offers only a flat extent of marshes, in winter considerably overflowed, but dotted over in summer and pleasingly diversified with the bright hues of the grazing cattle.

On a line of slight eminence above this level, and about a mile and a quarter from the sea, rise the ruins of the Castle which forms the subject of the following Sketch. It owes its existence to Sir John Fastolfe, the reputed original of our great dramatist's "Sweet Sir Jack," the ingloriousness of whose imaginary reputation has long survived the true renown of the real hero.

The Castle stands detached from the most frequented part of the present village of Caister; nor can they be seen in one view. It is placed near the western limit of the parish, a spot whence the tide of

population has since ebbed, taking an opposite course towards the productive ocean and the more frequented highways. Yet *West Caister*, as this district is now commonly called,—*Caister Holy Trinity*, as it was wont more reverently to be designated,—could at one time boast its individuality as a separate parish, and its possession of a Church as well as a Castle of its own. The ruins of the former are still to be seen, inconspicuous in their architecture and inconsiderable in their extent; the fragment of its square tower, now almost all that remains, forming a portion of a barn, and standing concealed from general view. For more, however, than three centuries, this church had its succession of rectors and vicars, and was patronized by the lords of the castle, who enriched it by their benefactions, were worshippers at its altars, and found a resting-place within its enclosure after death. The similarity of its fate to that of its statelier neighbour is striking: both have been converted into farming premises; and both, from this very circumstance, are daily wearing away.

Four hundred years have now passed over Caister Castle; and for half that period it has been allowed to stand unoccupied and to fall into gradual decay. Yet, not only at the time of its erection, when it was the favorite seat of a man so opulent and so distinguished as its founder, but subsequently after his decease, whilst tenanted by the old and honored family of Paston, it must have presented an appearance of much magnificence. An inventory,* taken upon Sir John Fastolfe's death, of the furniture it then contained, and of the rich plate stored within its apartments,—the latter detailed in a long series befitting almost royal splendor,

* Published in the *Archæologia*, vol. XXI., pp. 239–272.

—prove it to have been a mansion of no ordinary pretensions. Pleasure-grounds, gardens, terraces, and lawns, it may naturally be concluded, cannot have been wanting to such a dwelling. But we look in vain for any vestiges of these: detached portions of a double moat, and of walls pierced with loopholes and flanked with towers, and foundations that enclosed more than six acres of ground, are the only indications left of the extent of the building; whilst of its splendour, or of the dignified ease of its possessor, no further evidences now meet the eye than may be derived from the delicacy and ornaments of the architecture, the neglected barge-house, and the fragment of an avenue of tall elms which still crest a mound. The *Magna Aula*, the *Aula Hiemalis*, the *Magna Camera*,* and all the long list of chambers appropriated to dependants on the great man's hospitality, are so utterly gone, that every vestige of them has disappeared. Nor is the consecrated enclosure of the chapel, once brilliant with its "candellstikkes all gilt, and its pix and crosse, and its ewers and chalices, likewise all gilt," as well as with the "images of Seynt Michell and oure Lady," at all more clearly to be discerned. Even the *Coquena*, the *Larderia*, and the *Buttellarium*, whose adaptation to all sorts and conditions of men might have secured them a longer existence, have equally vanished; and so moreover has the less destructible enclosure of the *Cellar*,† concerning which we find in the *Inventory*, a

* See "*Inventory*" quoted in the preceding page.

† Mr. Everett, the present tenant of Caister Castle, remembers that, when first he entered upon the property, (about forty years ago) large vaults existed under what is conjectured to have been the dining-hall. They were at that time partly choked up, and are now entirely filled; perhaps, in order to render them unavailable to smugglers, who, from the vicinity of the castle to the coast, might have been but too apt to apply the vaults to their own purposes.

CAISTER CASTLE.

FROM THE NORTH.

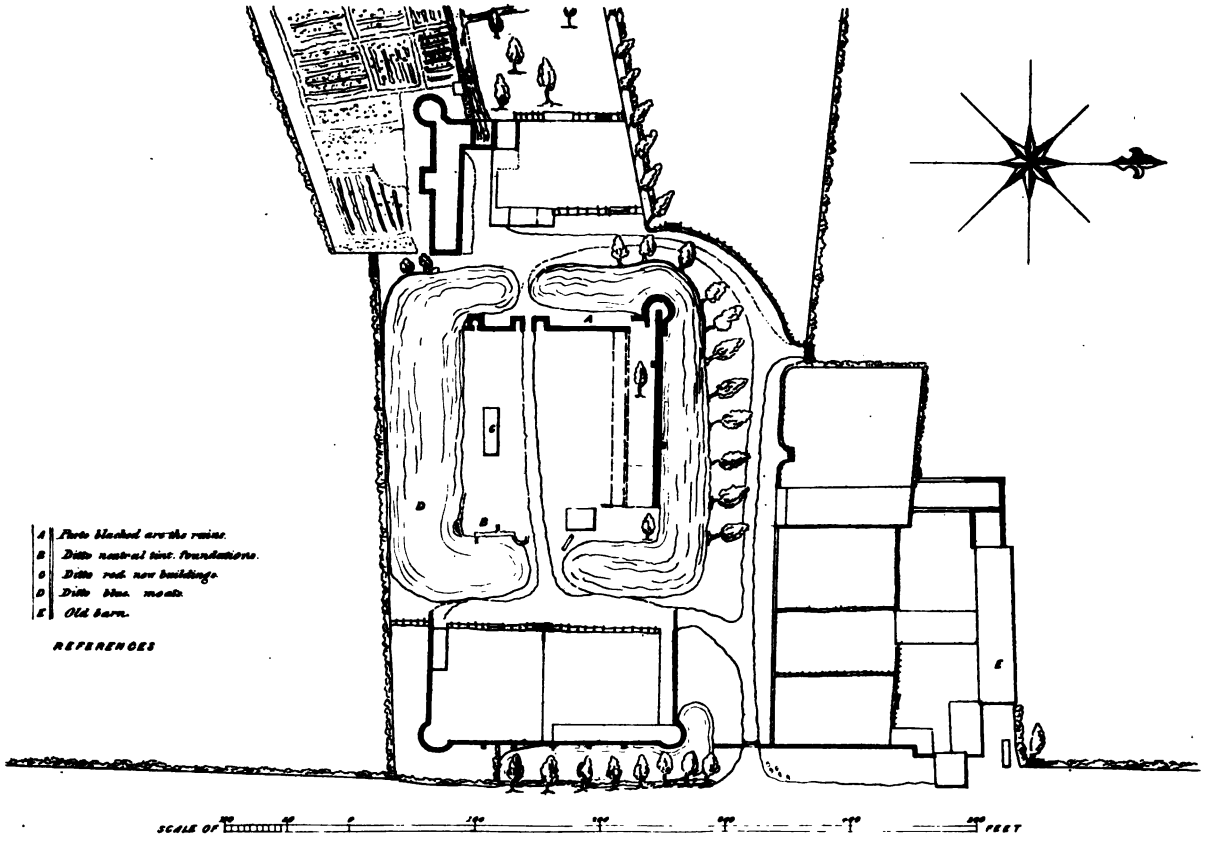
somewhat suspicious entry, touching "certayne vessells which John Ouresby is charged withal," and which seem upon reclamation, to have been "*lost!*" Yet were these self-same walls, that now remain only in all the bareness of desolation, once draperied with "clothis of arras" and "tapestre warke," and "hangyngs of sylver and of blewe;" and the apartments, whose "very ruins are ruined," were carefully secured from eye and foot of intruder; for in them were stored Sir John's massy plate, his sumptuous and costly wardrobe, and all "my ladye's russet velvets and deep-green damasks;" and even her knight's cherished token of chief dignity, his "blewe hood of the garter."

The architectural character of the castle is influenced by the time of its erection. It was built at that transition-period, when the heavy and strongly-fortified dwellings of our nobles, constructed mainly as places of security, began to be superseded by habitations of a less military character: when the class of society, one step below the barons, was gradually rising into importance: when comfort and amenity had gained in a degree upon sternness and force; and when, in short, frowning walls of massy strength, pierced with few openings and admitting little of the light of heaven, yielded to more graceful edifices, whose wider windows, ornamented mouldings, and sportive tracery, breathed an air of cheerfulness and ease.

What principally distinguish this ruin, are the elegance of its proportions and the accuracy of its masonry. Its most prominent feature is a lofty cylindrical tower, originally crowned by battlements, but now presenting an irregular and jagged outline against the sky. The more curious observer, whose researches

have extended to Normandy, will not fail to have remarked in this tower a strong resemblance to that at Falaise, attached to the ancient fortress, the birth-place of the Conqueror; the latter the work of the celebrated Talbot, long Fastolfe's companion in arms in the wars of that province. Here, at Caister, the brick, which, with an intermixture of stone in the more ornamental portions, forms the material of the building, is close in its texture and very pleasing in colour. The whole has acquired sobriety of hue by age; and though time and weather, and the yet more active injuries of man's destructive hand have shattered the compact masonry, and produced long and gaping fissures, it still stands erect and graceful in decay, high raised above the meaner buildings which have grown out of its ruins, and the bare-headed trees not improbably its contemporaries.

Unassisted as we are at present by historical documents or contemporary evidence of any description, and still further unaided by any continuous lines of foundations, it must be obvious, that whatever may be said touching the original plan of the building can be only conjectural. Grose, in his *Antiquities of England and Wales*, has engraved a ground-plan, communicated to him by Mr. Ives, according to which the whole consisted of two nearly equal quadrangles, placed side by side, east and west, connected by a narrow passage, and surrounded by a moat. But had the historian of Garianonum carried his researches a little further, and looked into the adjoining dwelling-house, he would there have found a quantity of masonry, evidently coeval with the castle, and a tower not unlike those at the two extremities of the eastern line of the enclosure. Here, then, the question rises, whether the tower just mentioned



CAISTER CASTLE.

GROUND PLAN.

stood like the others at one of the angles of the walls, or whether it was really unconnected with them. In the former case, there must have been a greater quadrangle that enclosed the lesser; while, under the latter supposition, the dwelling-house and its appurtenances must have formed a detached building, of whose shape, and use, and dimensions, we are alike ignorant. Both theories are beset with difficulties; and the reader who cannot visit the spot, must be content to draw his own conclusions from the annexed ground-plan, upon the accuracy of which he may depend. In each case, either between the two quadrangles or before the main entrance, there certainly was a drawbridge; for though no traces of such remain, yet in the inventory already quoted, particular mention is made of the chamber over the "draught-brigge," and a minute list is given of the furniture which that chamber contained. Of what may be called the outer moat, as farthest from the principal entrance, portions still exist, skirting the eastern wall—a wall pierced at intervals with loop-holes, and, as already stated, terminating in towers. The adjoining court was most probably destined to purposes more of use than of show, the offices, the lodging-rooms of the dependants on the family, and the college and chantry which Sir John Fastolfe had it at heart to found, and concerning which there will be much hereafter to tell. The inner moat, still nearly perfect, washes the walls of the smaller quadrangle. And here, it can scarcely be doubted from what remains, were placed the state apartments,—the great halls and the principal chambers allotted to guests of high degree,—as well as the armoury and the chapel. Of the chambers, distinct traces may be seen in the ample

fire-places, the wide windows,* and the smooth stucco that still adheres to the walls: whilst of the chapel, no doubtful indications appear in the elegant Gothic windows of a small recess immediately adjoining the entrance of the tower.

This tower rises at the north-west corner of the court. Its height is ninety feet, and its diameter about twenty-five: that it once was divided into five stories is evident, from the jagged projections of the intersecting beams and from the chimney-pieces within, as well as from the tiers of stone-coigned windows without. An hexagonal turret flanks it on its south-west side, and rises above it to about eight feet. Long after the castle had ceased to be inhabited, the turret preserved a fine stone staircase of one hundred and twenty-two steps; but these have of late years been removed;† and no foot can any

* Anstis, in his *Register of the Order of the Garter*, gives as a vignette to his Memoir of Fastolfe's Life, the representation of some sculpture, which, in his time, existed above a window at Caister Castle, but which has subsequently been removed, and now serves as a chimney-piece to the family dining-room in Lady Suffield's seat at Blickling. It bears, on one side, Sir John's armorial achievements; on the other, the same arms impaling those of his lady, each escutcheon supported by two angels. Above the central point of the arch, on a label, are seen the words "me ffaut ffare," and upon another, above his arms, "p. pens." These words seem to have given rise to the tradition that the castle was built, as a ransom, by a French nobleman, whom Fastolfe captured, and whom he is said to have detained at Caister. The nobleman was the duke of Alençon, who surrendered himself to Sir John, at the battle of Verneuil, in France; but it does not appear that he ever was brought prisoner to England; and certainly, as will be but too clearly proved in the sequel, the whole of the ransom was never paid.

† They were carried about sixty years ago by the Rev. Daniel Collyer, to the mansion he was then building at Wroxham, now the residence of the Trafford family; and they there form the stone parapet in front of the roof.

CAISTER CASTLE.

INTERIOR OF A PORTION OF THE CHAPEL.

CAISTER CASTLE.

WEST FRONT

longer mount the winding stair, to unfurl Sir John Fastolfe's banner from the staff which still remains erect upon the summit. The jackdaws, who seem to have made the castle their own stronghold, are now the sole inhabitants of this portion: they perch upon the once dreaded flag-staff: they fly in and out of the windows, as if they were rightful owners of the apartments; and they converse with each other in tones so loud, as prove they feel no dread of molestation.

The west front of the last-mentioned quadrangle still remains entire. It is in great part surmounted by a line of machicolations, and appears, from the size and arrangement of the windows, to have been the exterior of the great hall. These windows, a single row, are placed at a considerable height above the ground. Here, also, is the chief gateway; and, as might naturally be expected, more ornament has been lavished upon the decoration of this important feature than upon any other portion of the building. Grotesque heads, on long necks, project their grinning countenances over the summit of the gate; and with them are intermixed stone brackets, which partake of a Romanesque character, and are more debased in their style than might have been expected from the architecture of the reign of Henry the fifth. The same observation may be applied to the long line of similar brackets that support the cornice of the north wall, and alone break the blankness of that side of the quadrangle.

When one reads in the descriptive catalogue of Sir John Fastolfe's effects, that the castle contained twenty-six chambers, independently of the state-apartments and chapel and offices, it is impossible not to wonder that the traces of foundations now to be discerned are not more extensive and more distinctly evident.

Supposing the south-western tower to have had a corresponding one towards the north, and thus the greater area to have encompassed the other, as above hinted, it must be admitted to be strange, that, on the north-west and north, all vestiges of masonry should have so utterly disappeared. At the south-west angle, the portions that remain above-ground are considerable; and here we have not only the tower, now used as a dairy, but a low-browed arch, which gives the name of the *Barge-house* to the building that contains it. Tradition tells, that from beneath this arch Sir John Fastolfe's barge of state used to glide forth; and the dyke, now nearly choked up, across which the arch spans, was, within the remembrance of several inhabitants of the parish, a navigable canal that communicated with the river, and supplied the waters of the moat. At some distance from the castle, towards the north-east, stands an ample barn, of ancient but not coeval masonry, into whose gable has been inserted an escutcheon, enclosed in a quatrefoil; but the escutcheon now presents no armorial bearings, and its inverted position but too clearly argues the hand of some uncouth repairer.

It cannot but excite regret, that a ruin, at once elegant in its architecture, interesting in its history, and instructive from its well-authenticated date, should, through the neglect of a little judicious reparation, be suffered to sink into a state of absolute decay. Even within the last few years, the fissures in the masonry have been observed to increase; while the storms that sweep over the coast, and howl through the unprotected walls, threaten to shatter the tall tower, as they have already laid low a portion of the elms, which, " mossed with age, and high-top bald with dry antiquity," fence

CAISTER CASTLE. BARGE HOUSE.

with their matted roots the bank of the moat.* The farm-yard premises, too, that are built against the walls and amongst the angles of the ancient building, continually deface its ornament, and wear away its very structure. New barns and cart-sheds, and even new dove-cots nestled into the wide fire-places, form unsightly accompaniments to the ornamented gateway, and the keenly cut and delicate tracery. On the other hand, it is touching to observe that the iron stauncheons, perfect and entire, though

* Such is the real case; and yet to a casual observer it would probably appear that no alteration or injury whatever has taken place during the last century. There is a drawing in existence of the West Front (see *Woodward's Norfolk Topographer*, Appendix, p. 31) made by Mr. William Fairchild, of Blickling, in 1738, for Blomefield, who, as it appears from a memorandum in his own hand-writing on the back, intended to have had it engraved for his *History of Norfolk*; and this sketch might, with the exception of the uninjured battlements, be considered well nigh a faithful representation of what is now to be seen. Only thirteen years subsequently, in 1751, the castle was visited by an industrious antiquary of those days, Mr. William Arderon, F.R.S., well known for several papers in the *Philosophical Transactions*; and he, in a letter to Henry Baker, author of the *Microscope made Easy*, (a letter preserved in the same collection as the Blomefield drawing) gives the following description of its then state.—It will be observed that considerable damage has since that time been done within:—"On the seventeenth of last April I was to see the ruins of Sir John Falstaff's house, at Caister, near Yarmouth: the following are some remarks I made upon the spot.—This famous ancient building, when it was all standing, contained two large squares, whose sides were fifty-six yards each. They were both surrounded with a fosse or ditch, part of which is now open and is about ten yards wide. These two squares were joined by a large drawbridge; but at this day it is quite demolished. The square on the east was surrounded with the offices, several of which are yet standing, besides part of two round towers at the north and south corners. The greatest part of the west front of the west square, as high as the first story, with the gate, is also standing; but what has remained the most entire, is the tower at the north corner of the above-mentioned front, built of English brick. It is round on

mouldering with rust, still remain within the open windows; and that the hinges on which the door of the great gate once revolved, and part of the bolts that secured it in its place, may yet be seen imbedded in the stone-work. Such circumstances do, as it were, "move our human sympathies:" they recal days long gone by, when all, now so desolate, was life and activity and splendor; and while they set before our eyes a sad picture of the things that have been, they warn us, in a language not to be mistaken, what must be the fate of the things that are.

Having thus described the castle in its present condition, it may be well, before an attempt is made to enter upon its history, to cast a retrospective glance towards times still farther remote, and briefly to notice the more important changes which have affected the face of the country itself.

Various have been the influences, and various the lords, to whose power this eastern nook of our island

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the outside, but a hexagon within. It is five stories high, with a mantle-piece in every story of freestone, as are also the transoms of the windows. The main balks that go across the floors are still in being, and some of them very sound. By the side of this tower stands a pair of winding stairs, of one hundred and twenty-two steps, of seven inches each. I wrenched out of the wall of one of the windows in the tower an iron bar, which had stood some hundreds of years perpendicular; but it was not in the least magnetical. On the north side of the west square are the remains of an arched cellar, of near thirty yards in length" (*see note*, p.5) "and about seven broad, so famous for keeping large quantities of Sir John's *sack*."—Arderon then goes on to say, that a gentleman who lived hard by, told him of the report of the castle having been built by way of ransom, by a Frenchman of rank, whom Falstaff had made prisoner and brought to Caister, and that it was an exact counterpart of the captive's own residence in France; and his informant farthermore added, that he himself remembered the sculpture now at Blickling being in its original situation, though it was then removed.

has been subjected. Romans, Saxons, and Normans have, in their several turns, possessed the soil, and have each left behind them, in the appellation of villages and in objects that are still before the eye, unquestionable evidences of their sway. As regards Caister, its name bespeaks its Roman origin; and this is farther corroborated by the many relics, which, from time to time, are brought to light. The track of the plough, or the deeper labours of the clay or brick-earth diggers, frequently expose urns, coins, bones, and fragments of masonry. The ground has many such remains, to the historian valuable as evidences, though little so to the antiquary as curiosities; for the urns are in general much broken and of small beauty, and the coins are considerably defaced and of a late date.

The position of Caister, situated on the North bank of the Garienis, now the Yare, at the very mouth of the stream and directly opposite to Holland, marked it out as a spot for the military sagacity of the Romans to secure. They could not but perceive that this portion of the river, then so wide as to resemble an arm of the sea, offered a tempting opportunity for descent to the predatory Saxons; that the shore would afford them a landing and a lurking place; and that the course of the stream would give them access to the heart of an opulent district. They, therefore, fortified the Yare on either bank; and hence arose the military stations of Caister and of Burgh; the former guarding the northern, and the latter the southern edge of the estuary. In later times the sea has retreated, and has yielded to culture and fertility a tract of land which did lie beneath the level of the water. An ancient Map, preserved in the

Hutch of the Corporation of Yarmouth,* marks the surprising changes which have taken place in the aspect of the country. The date of this record is uncertain, and its localities are assuredly incorrect, nor less so its proportions—witness the extraordinary size of the castles and churches,—witness, also, the uncouth monsters of the deep, that are disporting their strange shapes and fabulous dimensions amongst the billowy waters of the ocean, each greatly larger than any fortress or even town. Yet enough of credible testimony may be gleaned from its outline to convince us that the spot where Yarmouth now stands was once an insulated sand-bank,

* This map was first brought into notice by Mr. Ives, in his *Essay upon the Garianonum of the Romans*. He there gives an engraving of it; and he remarks on the subject (p. 5) that, "upon observing the flat country for four miles, the distance between Caister and Burgh, a considerable part of which is still under water and retains a Saxon appellation (Braydon), it evidently appears to have been once covered by the ocean, and the mouth of the Yare, an estuary or arm of the sea. Tradition, the faithful preserver of many a fact which History has overlooked or forgotten, confidently and invariably asserts it. To assist this opinion, is inserted the ancient map of Garienis Ostium, as it is supposed to have appeared in the year 1000. The original remains in a chest, called the Hutch, belonging to the Corporation of Yarmouth, and was copied from one still more ancient, which appeared to be in a perishing condition, of about the time of Queen Elizabeth. I do not pretend to vouch for the authenticity of this paper; and I produce it, not to confirm, but to explain my opinion."—Mr. Hudson Gurney has recently caused the same map to be again engraved, after a more accurate copy made by the late Mr. Woodward, and colored like the original. To it he has subjoined another map, drawn by Mr. Woodward, with the corrections he considered necessary to the former. In both these, as also in a third, entitled *Roman Norfolk*, Caister and Burgh are situated upon small promontories or islands, at the mouth of the Yare, which is likewise guarded by other Roman fortresses, at Wheatacre-Burgh, at Reedham, at Horning, and at Happisburgh.

and that the sea rushed inland far beyond the walls of Burgh or Caister.*

Those of the camp at Burgh have withstood the ravages of time, and the still more devastating effects of ignorance or wilful mischief; and they present, in the comparatively perfect state of their masonry, the finest specimen in existence of a Roman "Castra Hiberna." But nothing of the kind is to be seen at Caister; and, in the absence of all historical documents, it is impossible even to assign the cause. There may, perhaps, have been something in the state of the adjacent country, or in the strength of the army of the invaders, which made it otherwise than desirable here to establish an equally permanent station. The greater probability is, that the encampment at Caister was one of the description termed "Æstiva," composed principally, if not altogether, of earth-works. It could scarcely have so completely disappeared, had not its materials been less durable than masonry: indeed, even its position can so little now be traced, that Camden and Spelman have arrived at entirely opposite conclusions with regard to it. The former, speaking of Yarmouth, says, "I do not with certainty pronounce this to have been the antient Garianonum, where the Stablesian Horse were quartered against the

* The same belief is confirmed by tradition, and *that* of times not far remote. *The Old Haven* was a name commonly given not more than forty years ago, to a spot on Yarmouth Denes, much north of that by which the Yare now disembogues itself. The term, *Grub's Haven*, even now marks a place more northern still; and thus, the testimony of tradition, of the map, of the natural features of the country itself, and, above all, of the construction of Burgh Castle, strongly fortified on three sides, but left altogether defenceless on *that* adjoining the sea, all combine to witness that Caister was once a maritime station.

barbarians, nor yet the neighboring village of Castor, anciently the seat of the famous Sir John Fastolf, famous for its antiquity among the inhabitants, though the Yare is said to have had another mouth below it. But, as I am convinced that Garianonum was at Burgh Castle, in Suffolk, on the opposite river bank, I can easily conceive that Yarmouth rose out of its ruins, and that Castor was one of the Roman camps to defend the mouth of the Gar,* now filled up." In Spelman, on the other hand, we read, "Veterem Garianoni sedem oblivioni tradidit alveum destituens fluvius, sedisque et fluvii incerta vestigia. Videntur eam duo vindicare, *Burgh Castle* in agro Suffolciano, quod meridionali fluvii lateri hodie incumbit, et a Boreali quatuor distans mille passus *Castor* villula. Romanam ostendunt ambo speciem, illud quadrilateram oblongam castrametationem muro coronatam, sed remotiorem a mari, et loco paludibus et angustiis ita impedito ut equestribus male conveniat turmis; *hæc in ipso litore, muri etiam et muniminis rudera prodens*, campestri loco equitumque discursioni litoris præsidio, quod huic comiti huic equitatui demandatum fuit, commodissimo ..... Garianonum igitur Castorem pono, Camdeno licet Burgh arrisit. Conducit in sententiam nostram, *Castor*, nomen a Romanis sumptum; præsertim cùm in totâ Angliâ, nihil, quod sciam, hujus nominis reperiatur, non Romanum."†

Of the *walls and ramparts* to which Spelman alludes, it has already been observed that no traces now exist.‡

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* *Gough's Camden's Britannia*, vol. II., p. 178.

† *Icenia*, p. 155.

‡ It is impossible not to suspect that the learned antiquary was in this instance labouring under error, and confounded the village of *Caister, near Yarmouth*, with another of the same name *near Norwich*.

Tradition, indeed, has long marked out a field to the north-west of the church, as the spot where the camp was situated; and a report moreover prevails, that the form and extent of its enclosure may still, under the influence of the morning dew, be discerned, from the varying hue of the herbage which covers the face of the ground. The fact is one not very easy to substantiate; and yet, in that very field, at no great distance below the surface, were lately discovered so many remains of Roman workmanship, in masonry, pottery, and coins, that the occupation of the spot by that people is placed beyond a question. A detailed account of these discoveries was sent to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, (November, 1837) by the Rev. Thomas Clowes, of Yarmouth; from whose letter the following is extracted:

"Some countrymen working in a field, a few hundred yards to the north-west of Caister church, by the side of the Norwich road, struck upon a wall built of Roman brick or tiles, and having previously found many skeletons in the course of their labours, supposed that this was a vault or bricked grave. Upon hearing the report, I went over and set two men to work to clear the place, that we might see what it contained and take the dimensions. Nothing could be discovered in throwing out the earth, except mingled bones of animals, particularly the ox and pig, with numerous oyster-shells, stones, and fragments of Roman pottery. When all the loose earth was cleared away, we came down to the natural

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In the latter place, there are still remains of an important Roman camp, not only consisting of extensive earth-mounds, but of fragments of beautiful and perfect masonry. Sir Henry Spelman had, probably, not been able personally to investigate the spots he described.

to uncover the brick-earth in a field about a quarter of a mile to the eastward of that in which we saw the pit, had discovered two urns filled with fragments of bone. I directly made inquiry, and found the report to be most *provokingly* true, inasmuch as the urns were destroyed and their contents reburied.

"The loss of the urns is, however, of less importance, as there does not appear to have been any peculiar difference between them and others I have seen. The account I collected from the workmen is, that each urn was covered with a tile, and that both were completely filled with fragments of bone. In one, the fragments were very minute; and I collected a few of them. In the other, the figure of the bones, they said, was more distinguishable. I saw the precise spot from which one urn was taken, about three feet beneath the surface. The situation of the other was rather remarkable, being sunk much lower into the brick-earth itself, six or seven feet beneath the surface; and the workman was at a loss to conceive how the people who buried it had got so deep; for it appeared as though a hole of about two feet diameter had been made, at the bottom of which the urn had been deposited, having been imbedded in a mass of wood-ashes or cinder-dust. The shape of this urn, he said, was precisely like a stone-bottle containing three or four pints, cut off below the neck, so as to make an aperture large enough to admit the hand. The urns were distant from each other about twenty feet, as nearly as I could understand their description.

"I was particular in my inquiries as to the tile with which these urns were said to be covered; as I remembered that the celebrated Sir Thomas Brown, of Norwich,

in his *Hydriotaphia*, says, 'among these urns we could obtain no good account of their coverings: only one seemed arched over with some kind of brickwork. Of those found at Buxton, some were covered with flints, some in other parts with tiles: those at Yarmouth Caster were closed with Roman brick.' Sir Thomas Brown also observes, 'the most frequent discovery' of urns 'is made at the two Casters by Norwich and Yarmouth, at Burgh Castle, and at Brancaster.'

"This brick-ground has been worked for many years; but I never remember hearing of any urns discovered there before. About sixteen years ago some were dug up in another part of the parish, in a south-west direction from the bricked pit, and bordering upon the marshes, which probably were at that time an estuary, furnishing access for the Roman fleets to Garianonum and Venta. In sinking a well beside the Yarmouth road, at the depth of twenty feet below the present surface of the marsh, there was found a piece of plank, which appeared to be the plank of a ship; and the common rumour amongst the more inquisitive of the working people is, that anchors have been found in the marshes at different times, indicating that vessels rode at anchor where all is now solid land.

"T. CLOWES."

To this brief and unsatisfactory account of Roman Caister nothing more remains to be added, than that, in a field to the south-west of the church, (possibly the same as that last alluded to by Mr. Clowes) a field generally known by the name of the "Bloody Furlong," were disinterred, about forty years ago, several human skeletons, disposed in regular order; and that among

them were found Roman coins, so that an opinion naturally prevailed that this was the burial-ground of the camp. But the farmer who then occupied the land refused to allow of further investigation; and the circumstance has now much faded from the memory of the inhabitants of the village; nor does any detailed account of the discovery appear to have been preserved.

During the more than six hundred years that intervened between the retiring of the Romans from Britain and the Norman invasion, no mention whatever is made of Caister. But in the Conqueror's Survey it again comes to light; and by this it appears that Godric was entrusted by the sovereign with the care of a lordship here, consisting of four carucates of land, of which eighty freemen were deprived, and also of twenty-two carucates, and that of all these Ralph de Vacajet, Lord of Guadir, made this lordship. The same nobleman is said to have married Emma, daughter of William Fitz-Osborne, Earl of Hereford, the Conqueror's prime favorite, and on that occasion to have been created Earl of Norfolk. He, nevertheless, entered into a rebellion against the king, and was forced to flee into Brittany, where, joining the Conqueror's eldest son, he embarked with him upon the crusade, and died, together with his wife, in the Holy Land. Caister was upon this granted to Hugh de Gornay, who had also accompanied William into England, and was in all probability another of his favorite captains; for his name appears among those who signed the foundation-deed of that prince's great abbey, at Caen. With the Gornays,—or, as they soon afterwards wrote their name, Gourneys, as now Gurneys,—the lordship remained till the twenty-second year of Henry the third, when, falling into the female line, it

passed by marriage into the hands of William, Lord Bardolf, and was afterwards partitioned among the families of De Castre, and Vaux, and Sparrowe, and others; each holding one or more of the four manors into which the parish was divided.

Such are the leading facts to be derived from the scanty notices of early times. In the reign of Edward the third, a name more immediately connected with the object of this work makes its appearance in the parochial records. John, son of Alexander Fastolfe, is stated by Blomefield to have purchased, in 1356, the Vaux and Bozoun manor; and the family continued to hold it, together with the adjoining manor of Caister and Redeham, till their final extinction by the death of the famous Sir John. Originally, they appear to have been of Yarmouth;* but even at that time, or probably still earlier, they had risen into importance, and were in possession of considerable property throughout the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. Their emblazoned shield, in the window of many a church, attested at once their wealth and their munificence. But these records, committed to tablets of so frail a nature, have long since almost wholly perished. At St. Margaret's, Ipswich, and at Nacton, and Pulham,† the light no longer enters the

* For an account of the Family, see *Blomefield's History of Norfolk*, xi., p. 205.

† According to Blomefield, (v. p. 390, second edition) "Sir Thomas Howes, chaplain to Sir John Fastolfe, Knight of the Garter, and one of his executors, was instituted rector here in 1465. — He had much money to be laid out about the repairs and ornaments of churches and other religious places; in all, about four thousand marks. With part of it he repaired this church and chancel, and in a south window there he put up the effigy of Sir John Fastolf, in his coat-armour, gilt very fair, with his

sacred buildings, tinged with the *or* and *azure* of the Fastolfe quarterings, nor does it "throw on the pavement a bloody stain," borrowed from the bend upon the escutcheon, charged, by the Norfolk family for difference, with three cross-crosslets of silver. In the intersections, however, of the roof of the church of St. Nicholas, at Yarmouth, the arms of the family may yet be seen. Their colours, indeed, are obscured by time, and on account of the loftiness of the building the details can be but dimly discerned; but they are assuredly there, and with them are the plain sable shield borne by

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CREST, on a wreath *az.* and *or*, a plume of feathers *arg.* and two escutcheons, with the cross of St. George, and his own arms; and

SUPPORTERS, being two angels, *viz.*

FASTOLF, quarterly *or* and *az.* on a bend *gul.* three croslets trefflé *arg.*, impaling

TIPTOFT, *arg.* a saltier ingrailed *gul.*; and the same is over Millecent, daughter of Sir Robert Tiptoft, Knt., his wife, whose effigy, in a mantle of her coat-armour, was in the same window, kneeling in the opposite pane; and underneath them was this, but these words only now remain,

* * * Fastolff et * * * * Ecclesie Rectoris * * * omnium * * *

Orate pro animabus Domini Johannis Fastolf Militis, qui multa bona fecit in tempore Vite, et Milecencie Uxoris eius et Domini Thome Howes istius Ecclesie Rectoris, et omnium fidelium defunctorum."

The whole has been gone many years; and no one now living in the parish can give any account of the how or the when. At Oulton, near Lowestoft, where also the Fastolfes had large possessions, there still remains in the church a brass to the memory of John Fastolfe and Katharine, his wife, whose maiden name was Bedingfeld. He died 1445: she, 1478. They are represented with their feet resting on a greyhound; and on the corners of the stone are the arms of the Suffolk branch of the family: a hawk *sable*, with wings extended. Similar escutcheons covered the whole ceiling till within the last four or five years, when they were all removed by the Rev. Edwin P. Dennis, the present incumbent.

BRASS for JOHN FASTOLF & WIFE.

in Oulton Church, Suffolk.

the Norman lords of Gornay, and the cinquefoils of Bardolph. Probably, the vicinity to Caister gave them all admission: certainly, the possessions of the Fastolfes in Yarmouth, and the splendid mansion, which we are told Sir John built for himself in the town, render it no matter of surprise that his armorial-bearings should be found in a church, where several of his lineage had their resting-place. Among others, occurs the name of "John Fastolfe, mariner," a man reputed to have been "of considerable account in those and other parts," both for his means and merits, and more especially for his public benefactions and pious foundations.* This John Fastolfe, the title of whose worldly calling may sound to modern ears incongruous with what is reported of his wealth and habits, had married Mary, daughter of Nicholas Park, Esq., and widow of Sir Richard Mortimer, of Attleburgh, in Norfolk. He died early, and was buried in the chapel of St. Nicholas, where his obit was yearly celebrated; and he left a son of tender age, born about 1378, to whom the patrimonial estate of Caister descended.†

This son, afterwards renowned in courts and camps as the Sir John Fastolfe of famous name, the Sir John Falstaff of our great dramatist, has suffered so deeply and enduringly from the false colouring with which

* Kippis, *Biog. Brit.* art. Fastolfe.

† Still in existence (see *Woodward's Norfolk Topographer*, Appendix, p. 32) is the original deed, by which Mary, Lady Mortimer, mother of Sir John Fastolfe, grants to her said son her manors of Caister and Caister Hall, together with her manor of Repps, and the advowson of the free chapel of St. John within the said manor of Caister, to hold to him and his heirs for ever. This deed is dated the first of October, 6th Henry IV. The seal of Lady Mortimer is attached to it.

Shakspeare has stained his memory, that it is but an act of justice to present him to the reader in his real character.—Sir John, in truth, was brave, learned, and pious; a patron of letters, a benefactor to the Universities, a statesman of influence, and a warrior rendered illustrious by forty years of active service. Being a minor and orphan, the care of his person and education was committed, according to the custom of those times, to a nobleman of influence; and he became the ward, and, as it is expressly stated, the last ward, of John, Dùke of Bedford, the wise and able Regent of France. From this distinguished guardianship he passed, as an esquire, into the service of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, second son of king Henry the fourth, and was selected by that prince to accompany him into Ireland, at the time he went thither as governor. Whilst there, Fastolfe increased his possessions by a marriage with Millicent, daughter of Sir Robert Tiptoft, and widow of Sir Stephen Scroope, who brought him large estates in Wiltshire and Yorkshire, and to whom he bound himself upon his wedding-day (the feast of St. Hilary, 1409) to give her one hundred pounds annually for pin-money; a sum which she continued to receive until the twenty-fourth year of Henry the sixth.

But the peaceful scenes of the vice-regent's court, and the happy hours of domestic enjoyment, were soon exchanged by Fastolfe for buckled armour and prancing steeds, and all the realities of combat and of bloodshed, in that land, where, as in our own days, so, many centuries ago, war tilled the soil to receive the precious seed committed to the bosom of no native earth. The stirring events which, during the reigns of the fifth and sixth Henry, were passing in France, rendered it at once a

noble stage for the display of deeds of valour, and a spot towards which the young and gallant spirits of the times looked with lingering restlessness. An appointment to service abroad was a welcome summons to a man endowed by nature and by fortune like Fastolfe. Once placed amidst camps and arms, he remained no inactive spectator, but engaged with the utmost zeal, and distinguished himself, as well in Normandy, as in Gascony, Anjou, Maine, and Guyenne, in most of the greatest exploits that were then performed. In 1415, we find him, conjointly with the Duke of Dorset, entrusted with the government of the town of Harfleur, and shortly afterwards a participator in the glories won on the memorable plain of Agincourt. Two years subsequently, he bore a share in the great siege of Rouen, and in the capture of the towns of Caen, Falaise, and Seez, together with numerous castles and fortresses in the duchy. The consequence was, that he soon received the appointment of seneschal of the province, and was constituted by the Regent Duke of Bedford, Grand Master of his Household. Nor did honors cease "to be thrust upon" Fastolfe, nor did he cease "to achieve them;" for the government of Anjou and Maine was likewise committed to his care: he was knighted as a Banneret on the field of battle at Verneuil, in which engagement he shared with Lord Willoughby in the glory of taking prisoner the Duke of Alençon: he was dignified with the title of Baron in France, in memorial of his gallant capture of the castle of Silly-Guillem; and, as a commemoration of the same success with Granville, he was elected, with peculiar honors, Knight of the Garter in England. But the most distinguished exploit in his military career occurred before the city of Orleans, at the memorable

"Battle of the Herrings," when, at the head of a small body of English, he routed a French army, powerful in numbers, and commanded by the "young and brave Dunois" in person. The occasion was a critical one: Orleans was hemmed in by English forces, and the fortune of the French was at its lowest ebb; but the besiegers were fainting for lack of provisions, and, to obtain these, Fastolfe had been dispatched to Paris by the regent. Returning, his convoy was intercepted by the enemy in great force and rendered desperate by their repeated defeats, in which emergency he drew up his waggons, laden chiefly with herrings, (for the season was that of Lent) around his little band as a fortification, and fought with such valour and determination, that he totally routed his assailants, and brought his provisions in safety within the English camp.

It must not, however, be concealed, that, soon after these brilliant successes, the fortune and fame of our knight suffered a sad reverse, as did that of the whole English army in France. Their courage quailed before the mysterious influence of the "Maid of Orleans." They were overawed by a power which claimed to be supernatural; and they not only allowed the city of her name, the key-stone of their conquests, to be wrested from their hands, but, when now the warlike and enthusiastic Joan of Arc was fighting by his side, they themselves became fugitives before the same Dunois they had often previously routed. Sir John, with Lord Talbot and Lord Scales, fled at the battle of Patay; and this circumstance appears to furnish the only actual point of similarity between the imaginary *Falstaff* of the dramatist and the real individual pourtrayed in history. Towards the conconclusion of the first part of his *Henry the sixth*,

Shakspeare presents to the spectator that youthful monarch surrounded by his nobles, receiving the homage of the governor of Paris; while Falstaff presses forward, hot with haste, eager to tender his allegiance. The Lord Talbot, between whom and the knight there seems to have been a rivalry, not unmixed with personal animosity, and who was probably not sorry for the opportunity publicly to fix upon his name the disgrace of the defeat at Patay, bursts on this occasion into the following bitter taunts, which even the presence of the sovereign had not the power to restrain.

" Shame on the Duke of Burgundy and thee!
" I vow'd, base knight, when I did meet thee next,
" To tear the garter from thy craven leg, [*plucking it off*]
" Which I have done, because unworthily
" Thou wast installed in that high degree:—
" Pardon me, princely Henry, and the rest,
" This dastard, at the battle of Patay,
" When but in all I was six thousand strong,
" And that the French were almost ten to one,—
" Before we met, or that a stroke was given,
" Like to a trusty squire, did run away;
" In which assault we lost twelve hundred men:
" Myself, with divers gentlemen beside,
" Were there surprised and taken prisoners.
" Then, judge, great lords, if I have done amiss;
" Or whether that such cowards ought to wear
" This ornament of knighthood,—yea, or no.

. . . .

" K. Hen.—Stain to thy countrymen! thou hear'st thy doom!
" Be packing, therefore, thou that wast a knight:
" Henceforth we banish thee on pain of death."—
[*Exit Falstaff.*]

It appears to be upon the authority of Monstrelet* alone, that Shakspeare relies for the supposed fact of

* *Chronicle*, vol. II., p. 507.

Sir John Fastolfe's having been stripped of the Garter. So foul a stain upon his character, it may safely be said, had no existence, excepting in the pages of the chronicler, supported perhaps by the rumours of those who had felt the weight of his arm. Anstis,* the historian of the order, who searched the records for the express purpose, assures his readers there is no entry of Fastolfe's name in the *Black Book*, which commemorates similar degradations; and, what is still more conclusive, regular mention is made of his attendance at the Feasts of St. George and the Chapters of the Order till the period of his decease.

At all events, the cloud cast over his reputation by the defeat at Patay, which took place in 1429, was no more than temporary. The very next year he was appointed lieutenant of Caen, and in 1432 was chosen to attend the regent into France, and was sent ambassador to the council of Basle. In 1435, he was invested with a similar dignity for the more important purpose of the conclusion of a peace with France; and in the course of the same year, the Duke of Bedford constituted him one of the executors of his will; whilst Richard, Duke of York, who succeeded to the regency, bestowed on him a grant of £20 per annum, "pro notabili et laudabili servitio ac bono consilio."† The four subsequent years Sir John Fastolfe is found quietly settled in his government of Normandy; and after these, he appears to have altogether withdrawn from active service, and returned to his

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* *Register of the Order of the Garter*, vol. II., p.p. 139, 140.

† This document, which bears date the seventh of May, 19th Henry VI., is in the same collection of original deeds and other materials formed for the elucidation of the County-History of Norfolk, already referred to.

native land, to the enjoyment of his honors and estates. Amongst the latter, although he had built for himself a princely dwelling in Southwark and possessed mansions in different towns, no residence held so high a place in his favor as his "*faire Castill of Castre.*" He had obtained license from Henry the fifth there to fortify a dwelling "so strong as himself could devise;" but whether this work did not receive its commencement till Fastolfe's return to England, or whether it had been begun previously, and was then carried on to its completion, does not clearly appear.

The last nineteen years of his life were devoted to works of munificence, charity, and piety. Both Universities admit him among their benefactors. To Cambridge, he bequeathed a large sum for the erection of the schools of Philosophy and Law; whilst on Oxford, and especially on Magdalen College there, he conferred yet more liberal donations. It is not necessary to look far for the reason why his bounty flowed peculiarly into that channel: a sufficient motive existed in the close friendship that united him with William of Waynflete,* then lord-chancellor. To him, the college was at that time owing its rise; and the name of Fastolfe is annually

* Patten, the family name of William of Waynflete, early became merged in that of the small village on the sea-coast of Lincolnshire, whence he drew his origin. The piety, the munificence, and the learning of Waynflete rendered him almost as illustrious as did the high station he was chosen to fill, and the important offices reposed in his hands. He was appointed head-master of Winchester School in 1429, and of Eton in 1440; and Henry the sixth promoted him to be his secretary, the keeper of his privy-seal, and, finally, lord-chancellor. The last office he held from 1456 to 1460. In 1443 he was consecrated Bishop of Bath and Wells, and in 1447 of Winchester; and he retained the latter see till his death in 1486.

echoed back by those time-honored walls, among the long list of benefactors whom it commemorates;* though the statute is no longer observed, which enjoined that, daily,

"The monks should sing, and the bells should toll,
"All for the weal of Fastolfe's soul."

Among the favorite objects of Sir John's declining years, was the foundation of the college for seven priests and seven poor men, in his manor-house at Caister. To this place of shelter, within the protection of his own fortified dwelling, and as it were to sanctify his new abode, he desired to bring the ministers of religion and the needy of the land. The purpose, so honorable to himself, he was unfortunately obliged, by circumstances, to leave unaccomplished. It will be seen in the sequel, that the fulfilment of it, a special injunction of his will, devolved upon his cousin and heir, and that by him, the chapel and college received their completion and the endowment of seven hundred and twenty marcs of rent out of the manor. But their existence lasted only a brief space; for the general valuation of religious establishments, made in the twenty-sixth year of Henry the eighth, contains a return of a "chantry in Caistre Hall, of the foundation

* Among his donations to Magdalen College were the Boar's Head in Southwark, and Caldecot Manor in Suffolk. By the statutes, Waynflete required that the seven senior Demies should daily recite a psalm and prayer for the soul's weal of Sir John Fastolfe; for which pious office, each was to receive a deduction of one penny a week from his battels. A daily mass was likewise instituted for Sir John, as well as for his parents and benefactors. In 1551, the advancing spirit of the Reformation caused all such pensions for masses, &c., to be converted into "exhibitions."

RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF ST. BENNET'S IN THE HOLME.

of Sir John Fastolfe, Knight, worth £2. 13*s.* 4*d.* per annum,* and such returns were sure prognostics of a speedy dissolution.

At length, in 1459, having numbered more than fourscore years, the aged warrior is represented expressing, in the following few, but touching words, his experience of "labour and sorrow," the inseparable companions even of an honored age: I am, he says, "in good remembrance, though greatly vexed by sickness, and through age enfebyled." Fever and a protracted asthma soon after brought his life to a close, at his manor-house of Caister, on St. Leonard's Day, the same year; and he was buried by the side of his lady, whom he survived, within the precincts of the abbey church of St. Bennet's in the Holme.† He had there earned for

* Blomefield, xi., p. 216, observes, that this *Free College, Chapel, or Chantry, in Caster Hall*, was erected by Sir John Fastolfe, in order to replace an earlier building which had stood upon the edge of the cliff, and which, by the encroachment of the sea, had been nearly destroyed. The latter had owed its foundation to Sir Robert de Castre, at a much more remote date; and John Fastolfe, father of Sir John, on his purchase of the estate, had pulled down the ruinous building, intending to erect a new chapel in its stead. This intention, however, he was prevented from fulfilling by death, and left the accomplishment of his purpose to his son, who succeeded to the property.

† The mitred abbey of St. Bennet's in the Holme, lying within the parish of Horning, in Norfolk, was founded and endowed by King Canute, as a convent of Benedictine monks. Wealth soon flowed in on the establishment; and it was so strongly fortified, as to be able to endure a vigorous siege, laid against it by William the Conqueror. From that time the monastery grew in reputation for sanctity, and no less in importance: it was enriched and adorned by the pious for many successive generations; and the highest names in the land were to be found in the list of its benefactors.

A gate-house, including two beautiful arches, is almost all that now remains of this once-celebrated building; and even that portion has

himself, a resting-place; for he had erected a chapel to the Virgin, of twenty-two feet in length, and had rebuilt from the foundation the south aisle of the church, constructing it "all of freestone, with a curious enarched vault of the same."* It was within this chapel that his body was deposited; and, for many years, a marble mausoleum marked the spot that embosomed his remains.

Having thus sketched the outline of Fastolfe's history, it cannot be necessary to descend to particulars to vindicate him from the misrepresentations of the stage. Indeed, to enter into any elaborate examination of the dates and minutiæ of the events recorded by the poet, would hardly, in any case, be allowable; certainly would not be so in a work like the present. On the other hand, it were injustice not to quote, by way of illustrating the feeling that existed even in the Elizabethan age, the glowing sentences with which old Fuller sums up his account of him:

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been converted into a wind-mill, and greatly defaced and injured. Alone, in the midst of a wide level of marshes, it looks but the more wretched from its position. The causeways which did conduct to it are almost entirely obliterated; and dykes form the enclosure of precincts once accounted sacred, and thronged with living population, as well as chosen to be the depositaries of the mortal remains of the great.

The title of Abbot of St. Bennet's still descends, with the Bishopric of Norwich, to the prelate who holds that See, and who is therefore said to be the only remaining mitred abbot in England. He has also, what was of old a kind of hunting-lodge or a country-seat, which, now occupied by a farmer, retains attached to it a tower, formerly the chapel. There are both within it and on the premises, many evidences of antiquity indicative of its origin. Some of its apartments are still called "the bishop's rooms." These are nominally reserved for the use of his lordship, and never inhabited by the family of the tenant. It stands in the contiguous parish of Ludham.

* *Blomefield's History of Norfolk*, XI., p. 207.

"To avouch him" (says the generous biographer) "by many arguments valiant, is to maintain that the sun is bright; though the stage hath been over-bold with his memory, making him a *Thrasonical Puff* and emblem of *Mock valour*. True it is, Sir John Oldcastle did first bear the brunt of the one, being made the make-sport in all plays for a coward. It is easily known out of what purse this black peny came; the papists railing on him for a heretic, and therefore he must also be a coward; though indeed he was a man of arms, every inch of him, and as valiant as any of his age. Now, as I am glad that Sir John Oldcastle is *put out*, so I am sorry that Sir John Fastolfe is *put in*. Nor is our comedian excusable by some alteration of his name, writing him *Sir John Falstafe*, (and making him the property of pleasure for King Henry the fifth to abuse) seeing the vicinity of sounds entrench on the memory of that worthy knight, and few do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling of their name."*

Concerning the qualities and cultivation of Sir John Fastolfe's mind, we are far from being left so much in ignorance as might naturally have been anticipated, from the remoteness of the period at which he lived, and the life of active occupation in which he was engaged. The interesting collection of papers, known by the name of the *Paston Letters*, contains ten from his own hand. Of these, four are addressed to Thomas Howys, his chaplain, and his man of business for the management of his Norfolk and Suffolk estates: subsequently, also, one of the executors of his will. They relate chiefly to dry and formal matters, such as the

* *Fuller's Worthies*, (Nichols' edition) II., p. 132.

purchase of lands and tenements, or the punishment of depredators on the property; but their style is manly and forcible; and, while they evince a spirit that will brook no negligence and tolerate no misrule, they manifest a laudable anxiety for order and good demeanour, and present as striking a contrast as may well be conceived with the slack government of the "fat old knight," whose most carefully cherished possessions would have been his barrels of palmy sack. In addressing Thomas Howys from London, in 1450, Sir John thus expresses himself:—"Item, I hear many strange reports of the demeaning and governance of my house at Caister and other places, in my wines, the keeping of my wardrobe and clothes, and (waste) of my lands,—praying you heartily, as my full trust is in you, to help to reform it. *And that ye suffer no vicious man at my place of Caister to abide, but well governed and diligent, as ye will answer to it.**" Again, in the same spirit, he writes, "I desire that John Buck, parson of Stratford, who fished my tanks at Dedham and helped to break my dam, destroyed my new mill, and was always against me, to the damage of £20, may be indicted. Item, he and John Cole hath by force, this year and other years, taken out of my waters at Dedham to the number of twenty-four swans and cygnets: I pray you, this be not forgotten."

On the other hand, in his correspondence with his cousin, John Paston, the heir to his estate and castle at

* *Paston Letters*, I., p. 53.—In the quotations from these *Letters*, the modern orthography used by Sir John Fenn is here chiefly adopted. He gives a two-fold view of each letter,—the one in its original and obscure spelling, the other a modern version. His care and accuracy and plentiful illustrations in the preparing of the work, render his publication a model to subsequent editors.

Caister, with whom he lived in habits of confidential intercourse,* the knight lays open matters at once of wider importance, and such as more personally regarded himself. Thus, in 1455, four years only before his death, he requests him, in a letter from Caister, to urge upon the king his long-neglected claim for the settlement of the Duke of Alençon's ransom. The sum, ten thousand marcs, was to be paid to Sir John Fastolfe and Lord Willoughby† conjointly; for together they had fought at the battle of Verneuil, and, whilst sharing in the perils of the day, had likewise shared in the glory of capturing the noble Frenchman.‡ His words are these, "Item, I desire to know who be the remanent of the co-executors of the Lord Willoughby; for the cause that there was due to the Lord Willoughby and me ten thousand marcs, (£6666 13*s.* 4*d.*) for a reward to be paid of my Lord Bedford's|| goods, for the taking

* In the codicil to his will, (see p. 42) Sir John Fastolfe declares not only that he entertains a "very truste and love" for this cousin, but that he regards him as his "best frende, helper, and supporter."

† Robert Lord Willoughby was an eminent general. His name is among those that fought at Agincourt.

‡ John, second Duke of Alençon, was son of him who was slain at Agincourt. After his capture, he remained in prison three years, and was finally released at the intercession of the Duke of Burgundy; but being afterwards guilty of treason towards his sovereign, he was again placed in confinement, and died so in 1476.

|| John Plantagenet, Duke of Bedford and Regent of France, third son of Henry the fourth. It may be supposed, that the ransom was paid into his hands as commander in chief, and that in that character he was entitled to a considerable share of it. But it appears, from the account here given, that he had detained almost the whole. Even now, at the distance of twenty years from his death, Lord Willoughby's representatives and Sir John Fastolfe had received only one tenth part of it, each.

of the Duke of Alençon. And the said Lord Willoughby had but one thousand marcs paid, (£666. 13*s.* 4*d.*) and I one thousand marcs; thus eight thousand (£5333. 6*s.* 8*d.*) leveth yet to pay, of which sum, four thousand (£2666. 13*s.* 4*d.*) must grow to the executors of the said Lord Willoughby to dispose. The king, who is supervisor of my Lord Bedford's testament, hath written and commanded, by sundry letters, that the Lord Willoughby should be content for his part; and so much the matter is the forwarder.*"

At the same advanced period of his life, but still evidently unbroken by years, Sir John presses his correspondent to assist him in obtaining the wardship of a minor. This was commonly an object with men of consequence in those days; for not only did it throw power into their hands, by placing the management of estates under their control, but it likewise gave them the authority to dispose of their wards in marriage, to whom and on what terms they thought proper. The letter in which the request is urged, presents a curious illustration, both of the times and of the writer's personal character: it exhibits the steadiness with which he kept his object in view, and the address he employed in the pursuit of it. John Paston is entreated to induce the sheriff to assist in forwarding the matter, and is himself urged to "take it tenderly to heart." The more effectually to quicken his zeal, a hint is thrown out, that a marriage should in due time take place between the intended ward and some one of Paston's daughters. The proposed match, which indeed never was carried into effect, is said, in this instance, to have been altogether a suitable one;

* *Paston Letters*, I., p. 120.

but it is plain that the inclination of the parties would not have been consulted, nor, in cases of that nature, was it customary to allow it to enter the least into consideration. The young man, whose future fate formed the subject of the correspondence, is discovered by the endorsement of the letter to have been "Thomas Fastolfe," son and heir of Nicholas Fastolfe, of Ipswich, and cousin to the knight. He was at that time about ten years old; as appears from a subsequent letter written by his mother, in which she complains that his guardians endeavoured to represent her son as younger than he actually was, in order the longer to retain possession of his estate. Four years, at the utmost, comprehend the time during which he remained under Sir John Fastolfe's guardianship; but he did really become a member of his household, as is made evident by the mention of "Thomas Fastolfe, is chamboure," in the inventory of the furniture and effects left at Caister upon the knight's decease. From the same document it also appears, that Sir John did not spoil his little kinsman and ward by over-indulgence in luxuries: "j fedderbed, j bolster, j payre of schetys, jj blankettis, j rede coverlet, j coveryng of worstet, and j testour," are the only articles enumerated in the catalogue of the contents of his apartment. But then, as if by way of compensation, and perhaps to keep alive his pride of ancestry, it is expressly said that the "arms of Fastolfe, embroidered on redé say," are placed at the "seloure," or head of his bed.

It is but justice, however, to Sir John, to state, that objects of this personal nature had not the same interest in his mind, and consequently were not pursued by him with equal ardour, as those he considered essential to his eternal welfare. As regards his projected religious

foundation, therefore, he in many letters addresses urgent entreaties to his trusty and well-beloved correspondent.—"Worshipful cousin," he says, "I commend me to you; and whereas I late wrote unto you, in a letter by Henry Hanson, for the foundation of my college, I am sore set thereupon. And that is the cause I write now, to remember you again to move my Lords of Canterbury and Winchester* for the license to be obtained, that I might have the amortizing without any great fine; in recompense of my long service continued and done unto the king and to his noble father, whom God assoil, and never yet guerdoned or rewarded. And now, since I have ordained to make the king founder, and ever to be prayed for, and for his right noble progenitors, his father and uncles,† methinketh I should not be denied of my desire, but the rather to be remembered and sped. Wherefore, as I wrote unto you, I pray you acquaint me with a chaplain of my Lord of Canterbury, that in your absence may remember me, and in like wise with my Lord-Chancellor; for seeing the King's disposition and also his, unto the edifying of God's service, it might in no better time be moved." Sir John concludes, by telling his cousin Paston that the Duke of Norfolk was gone on foot upon a pilgrimage to Our Lady at Walsingham,‡ and that, on his return,

* Thomas Bourchier and William of Waynflete.

† Henry the fifth, and Thomas, Duke of Clarence; John, Duke of Bedford; and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

‡ The image of Our Lady at Walsingham, the subject of Erasmus' Dialogue, *Peregrinatio Religionis ergo*, was, in those days, and had been for ages, held in peculiar veneration. It was resorted to by all ranks of people, from the king to the peasant, and by foreigners as well as by natives: many miracles were ascribed to it; and the abbey where it was enshrined daily increased in riches and influence through the

he was about to honor the castle at Caister by a visit. To this letter is subjoined an immediate reply from Henry Fylungley, who was connected by marriage with the Pastons; in which he writes—"My brother Paston and I have communed together as touching the college which ye would have made; and, sir, it is too great a sum that is asked of you for your license; for they ask for every hundred marcs that ye would amortize, five hundred; and will give it no better cheap." Fylungley in conclusion recommends that Sir John should follow the example of the executors of the Lady Abergavenny,* who desiring, in pursuance of the directions in her will, that seven or eight priests should sing for her perpetually in diverse abbeys in Leicestershire, and finding the royal demand for a license exorbitant, made their bargain with the abbot himself. The sum by him required was only two or three hundred marcs; and the priest moreover consented to place in their hands "manors of good value," as a pledge that he would "sing in the same abbey for ever†."

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offerings and bequests of the worshippers. The ruins of the monastery may still be seen in the north-west part of Norfolk: they are remarkable for elegance of proportion and ornament; and, by the extensive tract of land they cover, they show the importance of the establishment. They are happily preserved from further devastation by the taste of the present proprietor, Mr. Lee Warner, in whose grounds they stand.

* Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Worcester, (son and heir of William Beauchamp, Lord Bergavenny) and wife of Sir Edward Nevile, who by this marriage was summoned as Lord Bergavenny, in 1450.

† It appears by the letter here quoted, that the clergy were less exorbitant in their demands than the king or his ministers. The payment demanded by the latter *for a license to found a service*. amounted to as heavy a sum as was actually expended in founding the service itself. It is curious also to observe, that bargains might be made with abbots

A still more decisive proof of the ardour with which Sir John Fastolfe pursued this darling project, is afforded by a probate-act of one portion of his will, wherein especial reference is made to it, and in terms that admit of no equivocation. The document bears date, "at Caister, on Saturday next after the Feast of All Saints, November, 1459," being but one day before he drew up the remainder of his will, which purports to be written on the Sunday immediately following:—

After premising that "he had of longe tyme been in purpose and wille to funde and stablysh w^{t} ynne the great mansion at Castre, by hym late edified, a college of vjj religious men, monkes or secular prests, and vjj poore folke, to pray for his soule and y^{e} soulys of his wife, his fader and modir, and other y^{at} he was beholde to, in perpetuite:" he goes on to declare, that, because he had "a very truste and love to his cosyn John Paston," he commits to him the execution of this purpose within a reasonable time after his own decease. He then gives instructions that one of the said monks or priests should be master of the college,* and receive ten pounds yearly;

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and other heads of religious houses, without the royal license; and it is a no less remarkable fact, that security was given by the monks to the parties contracting, that the mass or service should be continued in the same abbeys for ever.

* In 1468, one master John Yotton, a chaplain of the queen of Edward the fourth, was presented by Sir John Paston, knight, to the mastership of the college. He states, in a letter to his brother, that he was induced to bestow the preferment on Yotton, "at the special request of the queen, and other particular good lords" of his. But perhaps Sir John, in this measure, had also an eye to his own interest; for, doubtful as was then his power of retaining possession of Caister against his opponents, he might hope, by complying with the queen's request,

that each other monk or priest should have ten marcs yearly; and each of the poor folk forty shillings yearly; and that a convenient dwelling within the mansion should be afforded them, for the repairs whereof they were not to be chargeable.* Finally, as if in requital of the service his future representative was thus about to render, he bequeaths to him "all his manors, lands, and tenements in North and South-folk, and in Norwich."

Such had been the unsettled state of the country during the greater part of Sir John Fastolfe's protracted life, and such the precarious nature of property, that it is not surprising to find, expressed in the same will, foreboding fears, lest the performance of duties like these might be attended with difficulties and perils.† The utmost endeavour is, therefore, made to provide against such emergencies, by directing, that if, "by

to strengthen his own claims and to gain her support. Yet, even then, we find a difference arising between the sum of money demanded by the chaplain and that which Sir John Paston was willing to pay.—*Paston Letters*, IV., p. 309.

* The individuals, for whose comfort these provisions were made, were soon taught by experience the uncertain nature of their tenure in those lawless times. A murder, and "many great and horrible robberies," had been committed by the "Parson of Snoring," in Norfolk. His crimes seem to have brought obloquy upon the brethren of his profession; and the poor priests at Caister participated in the disgrace and consequent persecution which fell upon their order. These circumstances took place in 1461, only two years after Sir John Fastolfe's death, at which time, Mrs. Paston, writing to her husband, complains, "the priests of Caister, they be straitly taken heed at by Robert Harmerer and other, so that the said priests may have nothing out of their own or other men's; but they be ransacked, and the place is watched both by day and night."—*Paston Letters*, IV., p. 31.

† Witness the struggles made by the Duke of Norfolk, in 1461 and several subsequent years, to possess himself of the estates, and witness also the siege which he laid to the castle in 1469.

unlawfulle trouble in y^is realme, or by myght of lords, or for defaute of justice, or by unresonable exaccions axid of hym for y^e license of y^e said fundacion,* w^t oute coveyne or fraud of hym selve, he be letted or taried of y^e makyng or stablishyng of y^e said fundacion," he shall then find, immediately after the decease of the testator, seven priests "to pray for the said souls in the said mansion." And if so many priests could not be procured, that then, after paying as great a number "as he could purvey," he should appropriate the residue of the appointed annual expenditure to the relief of "bedridden men, and other needy and true people," until such time as he could reasonably and peaceably found the college. Still further, as a last resource, he desires that, if the said John Paston, "by force or might of any other desiring to have the said mansion, were letted to founde the said college, that thenne the said John Paston should cause poule down the said mansion, and every

* In a previous passage, at p. 41, it appears that Sir John Fastolfe regarded as exorbitant the sum demanded for a license to found his chapel. Difficulties of the same nature sprang up in the path of his heir; nor was it till 1464, five years after Sir John Fastolfe's decease, that the royal permission was granted; and then, the payment required was three hundred marcs. The document that contains this bargain is curious: it is entitled, "*Appointment of the King for the Foundation of a College at Caister,*" and opens with the following paragraph. "The king, for the sum of three hundred marcs, (£200) of lawful money of England, or of silver-plate to the value thereof, granteth to John Paston, the elder, esquire, to make and found a college of seven priests and seven poor-folk at Caister, in Flegg Hundred, in Norfolk, for the soul of Sir John Fastolfe, Knt." The king further stipulates, that he "shall receive one hundred pounds of the said three hundred marcs, what time he shall send for it, and the remanent as soon as the said foundation take effect." This instrument bears date at Marlborough, Monday, 10th Sept., 1464.—*Paston Letters*, IV., p. 183-189.

stone and stikke thereof, and founde iiij of the said vij prests or monkes at Sancte Bennet's, and one at Yermouth, one at Attilburgh, and one at St. Olave's church, in Southwark*."

It were injustice to omit to mention, in speaking of Fastolfe, that he lived on the most intimate terms with sundry of his contemporaries, highly distinguished by their influence and their station. Foremost in the list stands Thomas Bourchier, at once cardinal, primate, and lord-chancellor. A letter, addressed by him to Sir John, is preserved among the *Paston Papers*, (I., p. 155,) couched in friendly language with no less friendly sentiments. The writer acknowledges "the very gentle goodness" that he "had shewed to him at all tymes," and invites him, "as the weather waxed seasonable and pleasant," to hasten to Lambeth and pay him a visit there.—John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, the last but one of that illustrious house, was also in the number of his friends and correspondents. The sad condition of England, torn by intestine wars, and particularly the disorders of the sister counties, where Sir John and the duke resided, formed fruitful topics for their letters. It was not, however, to letters alone that their intercourse was limited; for it is on record, that the latter did, at least on the one occasion already mentioned, exchange the princely state of his castle at Framlingham for a sojourn in Sir John's "poore place at Castre;" and it was probably during this very visit that there first arose

* The will from which these passages are quoted contains reference to other previous ones of different dates, all probably nuncupative, and none ever revoked; and it is most probable that these various wills tended to produce the litigation that afterwards followed, and greatly defeated the intentions of the testator.

in his mind that desire to possess the property, which he afterwards succeeded in accomplishing by violent and unlawful means.—It was, however, with William of Waynflete, bishop of Winchester, and successor to Bourchier in the high office of chancellor, that the knight had the privilege of living upon the most confidential footing. To him he turned for assistance in carrying any favorite measure: the aid of "my lord-chancellor" was one he never expected to solicit in vain. Nor can the connexion be said to have expired with Fastolfe's life; for the prelate became one of the executors of his will, and he appears, considering the very entangled skein thus placed within his hands and the conflicting interests with which he had to deal, to have fulfilled the office with remarkable ability and single-mindedness.—Sir William Yelverton,* appointed Justice of the King's Bench by Henry the sixth, and retained in that honorable office by Edward the fourth, and Sir William Paston, Judge of the Common Pleas, were also both amongst those that honored Sir John with their friendship. The former he addressed as "brother," on account of the connexion by marriage between their families:† the latter was allied to him by the female line,‡ and became,

* Sir William Yelverton was made King's Serjeant in 1440, and, in 1444, Justice of the King's Bench: in 1460 he was created a Knight of the Bath.

† Sir William Yelverton's daughter had married Stephen Scroope, son of Dame Millicent, Sir John Fastolfe's lady, by her first marriage.

‡ This connexion, the closeness of which it were impossible now to ascertain, was through Margaret Mautby, wife of John Paston. But that the Pastons considered themselves in the light of relations to Sir John Fastolfe is evident; for Mrs. Paston, in writing to her eldest son, prior to Sir John's decease, concerning the channels into which his large wealth would probably soon be diverted, and apprehending its

in the person of his son, the proprietor of the more important parts of his estates.

Still farther to disprove the calumnies of Shakspeare, it should be stated that learning, likewise, found value in the eyes of Fastolfe, who, not merely when it was dignified by wealth or rank, but equally when it shone by its own lustre alone, "was quick to learn and wise to know," and ever ready to patronize it. The name of William of Worcester* stands foremost amongst those which he thus associated with his own; and it is a name that merits a distinguished place in the annals of our literature. The intimacy between them took its rise in France; where it is neither impossible nor improbable, that his honorable lineage first recommended him to the great man's favor; for Bayle, Josselin, and Pitseus alike agree in ascribing to him noble ancestry. But early talent and early studiousness were not less likely to attract Fastolfe's observation; and Worcester, though more than thirty years his junior, quickly became his friend, as well as his shield-bearer and attendant in arms. In an intercourse so frequent and familiar as that between a knight and his esquire, the abilities of the latter were necessarily more and more evident to his patron's notice; and it seems he only waited till he withdrew from military service abroad, to render his young dependent the

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alienation to strangers, says, "yet, I suppose Sir John, if he were spoken to, would be gladder to let his kinsmen have part than strangers:" adding, "assay him in my name of such places as ye suppose is most clear."

* Worcester's family name was Botoner, as appears from two letters of his in the first volume of *Paston Letters*. He there signs himself, "William Botoner, dit Worcestyr." He was born about 1415, and died in 1461 or 1462.

assistance his wealth enabled him to confer. He placed him at the university, and supported him during his residence at college, where the student by no means disappointed his hopes; for Vossius and Anthony à Wood, two of the highest authorities in such a case, bear decided testimony to his talents and application there. Among his acquirements, Bayle enumerates mathematics, medicine, cosmography, and history; and Pitseus adds, that he was "antiquitatum scrutator diligentissimus, scientiâque astronomicâ præsertìm inclaruit." With all this, we must not wonder if, in the title of one of his works, we read in absolute conjunction, "*De utilitate Astronomiæ*," and "*De Astrologiæ valore*;" for Worcester, although studious, was not therefore necessarily in advance of his age; nor has the fifteenth century been the only period in which the precious ore of scientific truth has been found in the same crucible and amalgamated with worthless dross.

Oxford was naturally the place whither Fastolfe sent his young protégé, by reason of the important assistance that might there be rendered him by William of Waynflete. Patronage from an individual of so exalted a rank, could not but be valuable. The kindness of the bishop also greatly assisted, while it cheered, Worcester's academic career; and it becomes the less surprising that, thus supported, he was encouraged to give a permanent form to his scientific and antiquarian researches, and was enabled to produce no fewer than eleven publications. Bayle even adds, "pluraque alia congessit, quæ, an adhuc extent, ignoro." On his "*Verificatio omnium Stellarum fixarum, pro anno* 1440," the lexicographer observes, "hunc ille libellum, instante Fastolfio patrono, contexuit;" and perhaps it may, without fancifulness, be

believed that the nightly vigils, whose fruits were thus recorded, had been pursued within the lofty tower still remaining at Caister. Certain it is, that he resided there as one of the family; and, as was the case with Thomas Fastolfe,* had a chamber that was termed expressly his own. Not, however, his alone; for, in accordance with the homely customs of the times, that were too much; and he shared it with another, and one "Lewys" was his fellow-occupant. The furniture of this chamber was, also, like that of T. Fastolfe, of the homeliest description—a bed, a stool, and a table formed the sole articles provided for his use; so that, however his patron may have placed within his reach the means of cultivating his talents, he took care not to allow them to sink into slumber in the lap of luxury and indulgence. There is extant, a letter,† in which poor Worcester complains that he "is not amended by his master of a farthing in certainty," and that his wages depend for amount and for period of payment upon the great man's inclination. He adds, "I have five shillings yearly, to help to pay for bonnets that I lose: I told my master so this week; and he said to me yesterday, he wished me to have been a priest, so I had been disposed, and to have given me a living, by reason of a benefice; but that now another man must give it, as the bishop, if he would; and so I endure "inter egenos, ut servus ad aratrum." In the same letter, Worcester entreats, with rather ludicrous mournfulness, that he may not be styled "master," by reason of his poverty, and concludes with earnest hopes, that the knight might be brought into a better mood for others as well as himself. His dependent con-

* See p. 39. † *Paston Letters*, III., p. 319.

dition must at this time have been felt by him with great keenness; for he had taken on himself the charge of a wife and family—no little clog to an aspirant to literary eminence. His zeal, however, did not sink, even under such adverse circumstances. The quaint evidence borne by Henry Wyndesore, another member of Sir John Fastolfe's household, affords convincing proof to the contrary. Worcester and he were in London together; and Wyndesore, in writing thence to John Paston, thus alludes to his companion's employments:—"Item, Sir, I may say to you, that William hath gone to school to a Lumbard, called Karoll Giles, to learn, and to be read in poetry, or else in French; for he hath been with the same Karoll every day, two times or three, and hath bought divers books of him, for the which, as I suppose, he hath put himself in debt to the same Karoll. He said he would be as glad and as feyn of a good book of French or of poetry, as my Master Fastolfe would be to purchase a fair manor*."

The reader, it is hoped, will feel that touches like these are of inestimable value in the sketches of past times. They are free from the suspicion that but too naturally attaches itself to any high-wrought labored display; and they set before our eyes the situation of the scholar of the fifteenth century, in a form and colors that cannot be mistaken. To the learned man of the present day, when, as observed by an able author, it is allowed that "l'esprit est une dignité," they may afford a salutary lesson, by teaching him contentment on comparing his own situation with that of Worcester, the assiduity of whose literary inquiries deserves but the more to be

* *Paston Letters*, I., p. 173.

extolled, beset as he was by poverty and all its narrowing influences. "Per Anglorum limites omnes," says Bayle, "ubicunque res ullas peragendas habebat, visitatis conventibus, collegiis, monachorum cænobiis, ecclesiisque cathedralibus, antiquitates ille collegit. Et quicquid memoriâ dignum poterat vel ex bibliothecis, codicibus, calendariis, martyrologiis, antiquis sepulcris, epitaphiis, fenestris, aut similibus veterum monumentis haurire, tabellis vel rotulis inscripsit." The work by which he stands most connected with the founder of Caister Castle, and by which he hoped perhaps to show at once his sense of favors past, and favors yet to come,—the "*Acta Domini Johannis Fastolfe*,"—is apparently lost. More than one author makes mention of such a book as existing in manuscript; but how far it was ever published, seems matter of doubt. It finds no place in our largest National Libraries; and Hearne, who was indefatigable in his researches after manuscripts, and discovered that of the "*Annales Rerum Anglicarum*," appears never to have met with it. The *Annales*, the corner-stone of Worcester's fame, is a chronicle that embraces a period of one hundred and sixty-seven years: brief indeed and meagre in its earlier portions, but making full amends towards the close, where the author narrates the events of which he was an eye or ear-witness.

Nothing further is known of the history of Fastolfe's biographer, than the facts, that he filled the office of executor to his patron's will, and passed the latter years of his life at Pokethorp, near Norwich, where he left a son, who was himself an author; but the family has been long since extinct there. A passage in a letter, written only one week after Fastolfe's death, to John Paston, then in possession of the estates, gives reason

to hope that, however scantily provided for during the life of the knight, he was taken good care of at his death. The writer, William Paston, mentions him in the following terms:—" As for William Worcester, I understand he will never have other master but his old master; and to my conceit, it were pity that he should; considering how my master trusted him, and the long years that he hath been with him, and the many shrewd journeys [he hath had] for his sake."

The digression occasioned by the connection between Sir John Fastolfe and his literary friend, has insensibly drawn the narrative far from the subject, as well as from the period then treated of. Returning to the moated mansion, which the knight had completed and adorned for himself, and where he had resided with much state, in the midst of " ladies, and knights, and arms, love's gorgeous train, meek courtesy, and high emprize," the reader must be prepared to find the scene now wofully changed. The courts are still and silent, and the halls are empty; for in the room hight " my maisteris chambre," and in the bed " hangyd of arras," lies the warrior and statesman of four-score winters, the sand of his days and even of his hours nearly run out. It is November: the trees around the castle are bare: they scarcely retain one orange or crimson leaf to flutter in the blast: the wind sweeps over the moat: the ground is damp; and the air cheerless. Within that chill apartment, in which the interests of many are centered, the " chafern of latyn" imparts but a feeble warmth; and the " hangyng candylstyk," of the same metal, serves but to make the gloom more manifest. Neither is there aught in what is seen around to create a more cheerful impression; for the walls are draperied with a plain coating of dark

green worstead; and all the furniture—designed for use not show—is of the most homely description. Indeed, of the various apartments of the mansion, even including those of the domestics, none presented fewer provisions for luxury than that of the lord of the castle himself. Around the bed stand his friends, his executors, and dependants. Foremost in the group is seen John Paston, who had been summoned by an urgent letter from Brackley, to come "as soon as he might goodly," and to bring Sir William Yelverton with him; "for," in the touching language of the friar, "it is now high time: my master draweth fast homeward, and is right low brought and sore weykid and enfeblyd.*" Near to the expectant heir stands the abbot of St. Bennet's: he seems to linger near the bed, unwilling to relinquish a hope, still unexpressed, that, as this world recedes and another advances upon the vision of the dying man, the disposition of his property may yet be altered, and his own wealthy monastery may be still further enriched.† Gratitude, also, probably contributes to detain him on the spot; for often, while in the full vigour of health, the generous hand of his benefactor, "with lands and livings, many a rood, had gifted the shrine for his soul's repose." It is possible, also, he tarries to perform the last office of friendship, in the administration of the viaticum; or he may even be waiting to commit to the earth that body for which a resting-place had been prepared in his church. Friar Brackley, too, is there;‡—he, to whose exhortations

* *Paston Letters*, III., p. 343.

† See *Paston Letters*, ut supra.

‡ Dr. John Brackley was an intimate friend of Sir John Fastolfe, and, like Thomas Howys, was one of his chaplains and of the executors of his will. He also held the office of chaplain to Sir William Paston,

Sir John had often listened in the chapel of his castle;—and William of Worcester, full of grief, yet not without anxiety, lest the future should be no more a season of plenty than the past. Nor are there wanting many others, whose countenances of changeful expression betray their varied emotions, the hopes and the fears that reign within. The day is Sunday; the Sunday immediately succeeding the Feast of All Saints. Thomas Howys,* the priest and chaplain, alone is missing from the group; but he is not long absent: he returns, bearing the sacred vessels of the chapel,—preceded by the "gilt candelstikkes," the "Haly Water-stoop and sprenkill," the "pix, the crosse, the goblett;"—and the silence, the darkness, and heavy air of the chamber, give place to the brightness of the light, the gentle tone of the "sakeryng bell," and the perfumed clouds which roll from the "sensours."

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the Judge; and resided in his family for a time, as tutor to Sir John Paston, knight, Sir William's grandson. At an early age, in the year 1418, Brackley had been a brother of the convent of Gray Friars, or Friars Minor, at Norwich. The only one of his sermons now left, a sermon preached on a Whit-Sunday in his own convent, is preserved among the *Paston Letters*; but his eloquence occasionally enjoyed a wider sphere; for it is upon record, that he used to deliver discourses at St. Paul's cross, and received great applause as a preacher. In the same collection are several letters from him, addressed to John Paston. They are forcible and well written; and their clear style and the many quotations with which they abound, exhibit the clerk and scholar. The sermon just noticed is well arranged, and full of pertinent application of Scripture. Brackley was a native of Norwich, in which city his father followed the trade of a dyer: he closed his life in the year 1461 or 1462, and was buried in the church of his own convent.

* Thomas Howys was appointed one of Sir John Fastolfe's executors, and subsequently, as will appear hereafter, in right of that office, endeavoured, by a fraudulent bargain, to sell the Castle at Caister to the Duke of Norfolk. For further mention of him see note, p. 23.

And now, the mind of the dying man being relieved from that which must ever be its heaviest load, he summons his remaining strength to lay down his final injunctions. His soul, he, in the first place, commends to God, to the blessed Virgin, and all the Saints; and then, having given directions for the interment of his body, he proceeds to distribute his worldly goods among purposes of piety, benevolence, and public utility. The college or chapel, with its various occupants, is primarily remembered. To the repair and support of the harbor of the neighboring town of Great Yarmouth, and to the maintenance of its walls, he then bequeaths one hundred marcs; annexing the customary condition that the inhabitants shall pray for the repose of his soul. To procure himself a similar return, he devotes a "sufficient sum," at the discretion of his executors, to all the religious orders, both in Yarmouth and Norwich; and upon the parish-church of each village or town, where he had either a seat, or a manor, or lands and tenements, he bestows a silk gown, in which the priest, arrayed, should celebrate mass, and offer prayers for his departed spirit. His tenants and menial attendants are to receive a competent reward for their services, to the sum of three hundred marcs, according to their several conditions and merits; so, however, that the gentlemen and valets should have, each of them, double the rest; especially those who had attended him in all perils and dangers, in sickness and in health. The public roads and bridges, both in Norfolk and Suffolk, are not forgotten; neither is the repair of the parochial churches; and when all debts, legacies, and expenses shall have been duly discharged, the residue is placed at the disposal of his executors, to be distributed in furtherance of the salvation of his

soul,—for this was the object he constantly had in view,—among the poor, infirm, lame, blind, and bed-ridden: still, always with a preference for his own relations, neighbors, or tenants. Within twenty-four hours after these pious and benevolent desires were expressed, the heart that prompted, and the tongue that dictated them, were cold in death.

The execution of the will was consigned to no fewer than seven individuals,—William of Waynfleete, John Lord Beauchamp, Nicholas, Abbot of Langley, Friar John Brackley, Sir William Yelverton, John Paston, Thomas Howys, and William Worcester. Two only of the number, however, were to be acting executors,—John Paston, the heir and nearest of kin, and Thomas Howys, who had customarily ministered to his spiritual necessities. The duty of the others was confined to assisting them with their counsel, or to supplying the place of either which by death was left vacant. It is worthy of remark, that amidst all the testamentary injunctions, one only had reference to the pride or posthumous fame of the deceased:—that item is the command, that in every church, whose vestry he enriched with a silk robe, "his atchievement should be hung up, embroidered at the discretion of his executors, and such as should be most convenient or becoming to those churches."

The document from which these extracts are made, was written in Latin; and a fair copy of it, together with an English abstract, is quoted by Gough at length in the *Biographia Britannica*. It is evident, however, that it can have been only a codicil to one, or possibly several wills,* which Sir John may have caused to be drawn up at different stages of his declining course. The

* One of these was, most probably, that mentioned above: p. 42–46.

silence it observes concerning all the chief bequests,—those to his cousin Paston, to the universities, &c.,—proves that it was but a more enlarged and minute disposal of the less important portions of his property. Of the estates, some estimate may be formed from the article just referred to. The number of manors there enumerated amounts to ninety-four, and the church-patronage is represented to be extensive in proportion; whilst the long list of parishes, wherein he held possessions of different kinds, comprehends almost every one in the east and south of Norfolk, as well as in the adjoining portion of Suffolk. With Caister for his country-seat, he had at least three town-residences. That at Southwark was of such pretensions, as to have been styled a "palace," and to have excited, after his decease, the covetous desires of one of the highest nobles of the land, the Duke of Exeter. A second, at Yarmouth, the very site of which is now unknown,—"sic transit gloria mundi"—was "a splendid mansion." Of a third, at Norwich, there not only remain vestiges to mark the spot it occupied, but such as bear witness to its importance by their dimensions. To the like effect, Blomefield gives the following testimony.* "There stands in this parish, (that of St. Paul,) opposite to St. James' church, an antient house, called of old, *Fastolff's Place*, which was built by the great Sir John Fastolff, of Caister by Yarmouth, Knt., and is styled in some old evidences, his place or city-house, in Pokethorp, to which manor it pays a rent of 1*s.* 5*d.* a year. The great hall, now a baking-office, has its bow-window adorned with the images of St. Margaret, St. John Baptist in his

* *History of Norfolk*, IV., p. 436.

garment of camel's hair, the Virgin Mary, St. Blaise holding a wool-comb, and St. Catharine. In a large north window are ten effigies of mighty warriors and chiefs, as David, Samson, Hercules, &c., holding bows, swords, halberds, &c., ornaments suited to the taste of so great a warrior." It was in the year 1736, that Blomefield wrote: the house has since suffered great dilapidation and spoliation; the painted glass has been removed and sold; the massy walls are filled with mean tenements; and all that is left is the name, to prove the identity of the dwelling*.

* Through the kindness of a friend, who has lately endeavoured to trace out the scanty remains of this building, we are enabled to communicate the following particulars concerning its present state. "These remains," he writes, "now consist chiefly of two cottagers' rooms, formerly one apartment, in which the massy cross-beams of the ceiling, and the immense thickness of the walls alone evince the antiquity of the building. A baking-office, evidently of the same solid masonry, adjoins the dwellings, and bears the same character in the ceiling and the form of the windows. These portions of the edifice stand retired from the street, and look upon a court and narrow passage, and upon a neglected garden fenced by an ancient, but now broken and ruinous wall. Fronting the street, is a recently-built house, the proprietor of which, Mr. Fox, gave me the following information:—'It is reported to have been a baker's office for two hundred years; but it bears the name of Sir John Fastolfe's house to the present day. About twenty-two years since, the old part of the dwelling, fronting St. James' church, was pulled down and rebuilt. At that time, no images or painted glass were in existence; only a coat of arms carved in stone, which he had caused to be removed from the present bake-office, with the view of inserting it in the front of his own new red-brick house. But, just as the mason employed had carried it to the top of the ladder, the escutcheon slipped from his hands, and fell upon the pavement,—where a broken heap of stone alone remained. This coat of arms had been the sole vestige of the original possessor, which had survived to recent times;' but Mr. Fox added further, that he 'had heard Dr. Purland, formerly rector of the parish, speak of the splendid painted glass which

Property of such an amount and nature necessarily demanded no small vigilance and care in its management; and it is far from improbable that a man, accustomed from his youth to the society of the great and the license of the camp, found in his age financial details both tedious and repulsive. There were, however, those around him who strove to tighten the reins and rectify abuses; and amongst such, William of Worcester stands foremost. The following passages from his letters at once establish the fact, and throw light upon the state of household matters at Caister, during the latter years of his patron's life. One, addressed to John Paston, shows that the future heir had had the boldness to offer advice respecting this delicate subject. Worcester writes, "Ye moved a good matter at your late being at Caister, that my master should be learned what his household standeth upon yearly; and, that done, then to see by the revenues of his yearly livelihood, what may be assigned out to maintain his said household, and what to bear out his pleas, and also to pay for his foreign charges and deeds of alms, to a convenient sum. My master cannot know whether he go backward or forward, till this be done." The counsel, however salutary, did not apparently meet with sufficient heed; for within a month after-

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had filled the window of the baking-office, and as he, the narrator, believed, now adorns the chapel of Lord Stafford's mansion at Costesey.' He pointed out, moreover, a detached building, standing at the extremity of the garden, of dark brick, with stone mullioned windows, and a roof of high pitch. To this, which is now a malting-office, and had been a bridewell, tradition affixes a religious character, calling it the chapel of Sir John Fastolfe's house. Nothing, however, but the ancient walls now remain, despoiled of every trace of an ecclesiastical purpose. This building is beyond the precincts of St. Paul's parish, and stands in that of St. James: its position is to the west of Sir John Fastolfe's house."

wards, Worcester again addresses himself to the same correspondent, entreating him to see to the getting in of Sir John Fastolfe's bills annually, and to the auditing of his accounts and the making up of his household-book; adding also, that, whereas his master "was wont for twelve years together to lay up money yearly at London and Caister, now, the contrary,—and 'de malo in pejus.'*"

It seems probable that two interesting documents, likewise in the third volume of the *Paston Letters*, are referable to the hand of this vigilant steward. They contain, in a clear and circumstantial statement, the sums due to Fastolfe from the crown, as well for his foreign services as for those rendered by him at home; and they set forth complaints of sundry grievances committed against him. They accuse the Duke of Suffolk of wresting from him manors, subjecting him to oppressions, and making him writhe under "amercements and horrible extortions;" and they charge the sovereign with unjustly detaining "the baronies of Sillie-Guillem and Lazuze, which produced four thousand saluts† of yearly rent." The royal promise had been passed to guarantee an adequate compensation for these baronies; but promises, and especially where money is concerned, are far from being at all times religiously observed by any set of men, in any condition; and, assuredly, experience does not warrant the belief, that the higher the rank of the promiser the more is the dependence to be placed on his punctuality. With a king, therefore, it is perhaps not greatly to be wondered at, that Fastolfe

* *Paston Letters*, III., p. 296–301.

† The *Salut* was a gold coin of Henry the sixth, current in France for one pound five shillings of English money.

should in such a matter have found himself endamaged to the sum of two thousand five hundred marcs, [£1666. 13*s.* 4*d.*]—The name of the Duke of Bedford, the guardian of his youth, likewise appears in the list of aggressors. He had been guilty of depriving his friend of a possession yet more precious than those just named—a prisoner won in combat by the valour of his own right arm. The prisoner in question was Guillaume Remond, governor of the castle of Pacy, a fortress which Fastolfe had captured in 1423. The stipulation for his ransom, amounting to two thousand three hundred saluts, was on the point of being paid, when the regent privily carried off the captive, and by his intervention procured the surrender of the town of Compiégne. Nay, even after the death of that prince, his executors, notwithstanding Fastolfe himself was of the number,* pursued a similar course: they neglected to discharge what remained due of the ransom of the Duke of Alençon,† and they refused remuneration for the expenditure of a yet heavier sum, laid out upon "the keeping of fortresses, castles, and towns, and even lent in hard coin to the deceased."—A still farther cause of complaint was, the delay in the settlement of the costs incurred in the discharge of the several offices of constable of Bourdeaux, lieutenant of Honfleur, and governor of Normandy, as well as a great variety of expenses connected with the duchy of Guyenne, and with Alençon, Fresney le Vicomte, Verneuil, and other places there detailed. Amongst these particulars, one item of forty-two pounds, due and owing for "keeping and victualling the Bastille of St. Anthony, at Paris," has, by the events

* See p. 30. † See p. 38.

of the last fifty years, assumed a more than commonly interesting character.

Heavy as were these foreign grievances, among which the long list of losses and debts amounted to no less a sum than £18,150. 1*s*. 1¼*d*., they by no means filled the measure. There still remained what must—when it is remembered how Fastolfe had defended his sovereign's tottering throne, and had adhered to his cause through all the vicissitudes of civil wars and all the misfortunes of the House of Lancaster—have been the "unkindest cut" of all. In the following passage, it is the knight himself who is addressing the king, albeit he uses the third person.—"Item, since the last coming over of the said Fastolfe into this realm, by the space of fifteen years and more, he hath borne great costs, charges, and expenses, at all times attending upon the king's highness and the lords of his council, as he hath had in commandment and was his part for to do. For this, and for all the service that he hath done to the right noble prince, king Henry the fourth, ayeul [grandfather] to our sovereign lord that now is, and to the most victorious prince and king his father, whose souls God assoil, and also to our said sovereign lord, he hath had neither fee, wages, reward, nor recompense in this his realm of England; but hath borne it of his own proper goods at all times, which is to him right grievous and chargeable; trusting to have been considered and rewarded, as other men of such deserving have been in the times of the right noble progenitors of our said sovereign lord, late kings of these realms." This memoir and the other of the same tenour are both without dates; but they must, by the allusion they contain to the period at which Sir John quitted France, have been drawn up

in the year 1455. The troublous reign of "the meek usurper" was at that time drawing near to its close; and perhaps it was in the power of the monarch to do but little to requite his adherents. Yet, doubtless, it must have been galling to the knight, to see himself, if not

"Deserted in his utmost need,
"By those his former bounty fed,"

yet certainly overlooked by the court, and left to pass an undistinguished old age within his moated castle on the extreme border of East Anglia.

Mention has already been made that Sir John Fastolfe was buried, according to his own directions, in the abbey of St. Bennet's. It would have been interesting if, in addition to the other records left concerning him, there had remained a circumstantial account of the interment of such a man—the funeral array, the steeds caparisoned, the banners outspread, and the empty casque of the deceased crowned with sable plumes, borne aloft, together with his achievements of arms, all now no more than a passing show. In traversing the fifteen miles between the castle and monastery, a dead open flat, the long procession must ever and anon have been visible for a considerable space; and well may be imagined its train, swelled by retainers as it advanced, delineating itself, as far as eye could reach, upon the raised causeway, which tracked the otherwise almost pathless marshland.

The castle and the abbey—Fastolfe's home whilst living, and his home when dead—now alike present but ruined fragments. Of the two, the religious edifice has suffered far most deeply; for there are standing only a few crumbling walls, and the injured relics of an ornamented

gate-house.* The practised eye is, however, able to trace in the foundations many of its arrangements, and among them the church, and even its aisle that contained Fastolfe's tomb.

As regards his funeral, one brief allusion alone is made to it in a letter from William of Worcester, which hints at "complaints against fryar Brackley" on the occasion. Probably, therefore, the desire expressed by the bishop of Winchester, that "his burying should be done worshiply, according to his degree," had not been duly observed by those whose part it was to fulfil such directions. This prelate, both on account of his high rank, as well in the church as the state, and of his peculiarly close friendship with the deceased, was looked up to by the rest of the executors as their head and chief adviser. They had, shortly after Fastolfe's death, applied to him for counsel, and had in reply been charged quickly to pay such legacies as should incite their recipients to pray for the soul of the departed, and to keep his "month's mind" with regular observance, and to distribute one hundred marcs [£66. 13*s.* 4*d.*] "in masses-saying and in alms to the poor." All more particular instructions he defered till the general convening of the executors, when permanent arrangements should be made for the management of the affairs entrusted to their care.† In the same letter, the bishop gives the judicious counsel that the moveable property of all descriptions should forthwith be sought out and collected together, from his different mansions, and from the various religious houses where it had been deposited for the safer custody; which done, that a catalogue of the whole should, without

* See p. 33.—*Note.* † *Paston Letters.* III., p. 359.

delay, be prepared. To the latter suggestion, is probably owing the valuable document, to which reference has already been made on more than one occasion in these pages. It purports to be an *Inventory of the money, plate, wardrobe, and furniture, which belonged to Sir John Fastolfe, at the time of his decease;* and, abounding in circumstantial details, it exhibits an interesting view of the effects of an English gentleman of rank during the fifteenth century. The original document, comprised in two parchment rolls, was in the possession of Blomefield, after whose death it disappeared, and has never since been heard of. Luckily, however, the loss, as far as regards all useful purposes, is not great; for he himself made a copy for his friend and patron, Sir Andrew Fountaine; and this transcript, bearing an attestation of its accuracy under the historian's own autograph, is still preserved in the library at Narford. Its late possessor,—and a more worthy one could not be,—very liberally communicated it to the Society of Antiquaries; and by them it was printed at full length, illustrated with annotations by its learned editor, Mr. Amyot.* This gentleman, feeling that "the length and minuteness of the details" might, at the same time they "rendered it unfit to be read to the Society," probably, also alarm the general reader, prefixed to the catalogue a summary of its contents, from which it is hoped the following copious extracts may not be unacceptable; considering that, to use Mr. Amyot's words, "no Inventory equally detailed, and of an equally early date, is known elsewhere to exist."

* *Archæologia*, XXI., p 232-280

"The first class of property described consists of coin in gold and silver, amounting in the whole to £2,643. 10*s.*, which certainly in those days must have been a sum of no inconsiderable value. Part of this was found at Fastolfe's houses in Caister and London; but the greater portion of it, exceeding £2,000, had been deposited by him in the abbey of St. Bennet in the Holme.

"Next described is Sir John Fastolfe's plate; and some idea may be formed of the magnificence of his castellated mansion, when it is stated, that it contained, besides some gold plate, not fewer than thirteen thousand four hundred ounces of silver, and that he had had the royal licence to employ five vessels in bringing over materials for building and furnishing it.* Besides the plate at Caister, more than three thousand ounces had been placed by him at St. Bennet's abbey, and a farther quantity exceeding two thousand five hundred ounces had been removed from Norfolk to his town-mansion at Bermondsey. Many of the articles appear to have been of a rich and massive description; such, for instance, as a salt-cellar 'like a *Bastell*, alle gilt with roses,' weighing seventy-seven ounces, and another of greater bulk, 'gilt, with many windowes;' a spice-plate of one hundred and ten ounces, 'well gilt like a double rose;' and four 'cuppes gilt like founteyns,

* The license for this purpose is preserved in *Rymer's Fœdera*, IX., p. 44. The object is described "pro expeditione operationum suarum ædificationis et *stuffuræ* hospitii sui;" and the vessels which Fastolfe was allowed to employ, are oddly designated "duas naves vocatas *Playtes*, quandam navem vocatam *a Cogship*, unam aliam navem vocatam *a Farecroft*, necnon duas *Balingeras*."

with one columbine floure enameled in the myddes.' The heaviest article is a flagon weighing three hundred and sixty-eight ounces, which, when filled according to the measure of Fastolfe's hospitality, would, in these 'degenerate days,' hardly be raised or circulated on the board without some difficulty.

"The chapel, also, of the mansion appears to have been well furnished with suitable plate, of a costly and curious kind.

"The second roll commences with an ample wardrobe; so minutely described as to furnish the artist and antiquary with a rather acceptable addition to our stock of information respecting the costume of the later Plantagenet reigns. It is classed with systematic precision under the heads, *Togæ*, *Tunicæ*, and *Capucia;* and the great proportion of velvet of which the dresses were composed shows them to have been of no light description.

"Next follows a list of 'clothis of arras and of tapstre-worke.' With the exception of two pieces, pourtraying the Assumption and the Adoration of the Shepherds, the subjects are either of a familiar or romantic kind. Hawking, hunting, and duck-shooting, come in for their share in the celebration; but we meet also with a 'cloth of nine conquerors;' and another of 'the siege of Falaise.' Nor should I omit to notice a 'geyaunt beryng the legge of a bere in his honde,' and 'a gentlewoman *harping* by a castle.'

"This list is succeeded by one of 'canvass in the wardrop, and fyne lynen and clothe of divers sortes.' It would appear, from the abundant supply of clothing materials given under this head, that it was the practice in houses remote from the metropolis, to hoard up large stores of such articles in readiness for use.

"The furniture of all classes is then described, in the order of the respective rooms in which it was arranged. Among the articles in the steward's room, I find 'three grete brass pottys of *Frenche* making,' and 'four chafernes of the *Frenche gyse* for sewys.' There is also a 'fountayne of latyne to sette in pottys of wine.' It is evident, therefore, that French fashions, and many of the luxuries which are now prevalent, were then equally prized. Not only featherbeds are found in most of the chambers, even down to the porter's, but pillows of down and of lavender appear in all the principal ones, except that occupied by Sir John Fastolfe. The old warrior himself, however, did not disdain to repose on a featherbed, covered with blankets of fustian. The cook slept under a coverlet of roses and blood-hounds' heads.

"At the castellated abode of so distinguished a commander, the catalogue of armour may be expected to be copious. The great hall was furnished with eleven cross-bows, a boar-spear, and a target; and the winter-hall was decorated with a cloth of arras of the 'Morysch,' or, as Blomefield interprets it, the 'Morris-dance.'

"It is remarkable that, in a mansion so celebrated for its hospitalities, the cellar should be found to contain only two pipes of red wine, and none of any other description. The buttery had its gallon pots, and pottles of leather, with two 'grete and hoge botellis.' It had, besides, some plate not before described, including six 'chacyd pecys gilt by the bordurys with the *towche of Parice*.'

Mr. Amyot finally observes, "I cannot conclude this summary without adverting to what may appear a remarkable omission. I allude to the absence of books

of every description. The inventory, it is true, bears date a few years before the introduction of printing in England. Still it might have been expected that an extensive library of manuscript volumes would have been found in the house, in addition to two missals, a psalter, and a martyrology, which are noticed among the furniture of the chapel. Had no classics appeared, we might yet have looked for stores of divinity, both scholastic and practical, as well as for the popular native poetry of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, and for no inconsiderable supply of French chronicles and romances; the probable acquisitions of the continental warfare in which Fastolfe had been so long engaged. His learned secretary, William of Worcester, does not seem to have directed his patron's taste to the acquirement of a library; though in his own person he engaged in the pursuit of books with the ardour of a modern bibliomaniac. In addition to the passage in one of the *Paston Letters*, which states that Worcester was as eager to procure a good book of French or of poetry, as his master, Fastolfe, was to purchase a fair manor,* another letter in the same collection shows that he had obtained possession of two volumes that belonged to his patron, though they are not described in the present inventory, one of them a Chronicle of Jerusalem, and the other a History of Fastolfe's own military achievements.† On the whole, it is probable that Sir John, while he was a liberal benefactor to learned establishments, contented

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* *Paston Letters*, I., p. 173.—See p. 50, *supra*.

† *Paston Letters*, IV., p. 78.—It is not very clear, in the letter here referred to, whether the book in question was Worcester's own composition, (see p. 51, *supra*) or was written by some other person.

himself, as his contemporaries of high rank probably did, with promoting literature by his bounty, without partaking of its enjoyments.*"

* Scanty as was the provision made at Caister, in the time of Fastolfe, for the entertainment or instruction of the mind, the castle was far from being unprovided with means of amusement, not irrational. The backgammon-board, and probably, also, the draught and the chess-board, was at hand, as often as winter or the easterly blasts, so prevalent in Norfolk, prevented the knight and his friends from having recourse to hawking or hunting, or employment abroad. The inventory, among other similar entries, makes mention expressly of "jjj payre of tablys of cipris in cases of lether," together with "j other payre of tablys enrayed without, and men in baggys longing ther to."—Upon the accession of John Paston to the property, things were materially improved, as far as literature was concerned. The *Paston Letters*, (II. p. 300) contain a very curious paper, which purports to be a catalogue of his English library. The number of volumes is eleven; but nearly every one contains several articles. The leading subjects are, as might be expected, religion, romance, chivalry, and heraldry; with which are intermingled chronicles and fables, and translations of Cicero's Treatises *de Amicitiâ* and *de Senectute*.—The last of these was afterwards printed in 1481, by Caxton; the following extract from whose preface is too honorable to Fastolfe's memory to be here omitted:—"Whiche book was translated, and the historyes openly declared, by the ordinaunce and desyre of the noble auncyent knyght, Sir John Fastolff, of the countee of Norfolk, Banneret, lyving the age of four score yere; exercising the warrys in the royame of Fraunce and other countrees, for the diffence of unyversal welfare of both royames of England and Fraunce, by forty yeres endurying, the fate of armes haunting, and in admynystrying justice, and politique governaunce under thre kings: that is to wete, Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI., and was governour of the duchey of Angeou and the countee of Mayne, capytayne of many townys, castellys, and fortressys in the said royame of Fraunce, havyng the charge and saufguard of them dyverse yeres; ocupying and rewlynge thre hundred speres, and the bowes accustomed thenne; and yeldying good accompt of the foresaid townys, castellys, and fortressys to the sayd kyngs, and to theyre lyeutenauntes, prynces of noble recommendation; as Johan, Regent of Fraunce, Duc of Bedford; Thomas, Duc of Clarence; and other lyeutenantes."

After having treated at so great, and what may possibly be called so unreasonable a length, of Sir John Fastolfe and his effects, it may, perhaps, with fairness be urged, that it is time to return to the object of the work, as set forth in the title-page—the History of Caister Castle. And yet, after all, what is the history of a house, but that of its occupants? From what other source can it derive a real interest? A building may be noble in its integrity, or picturesque in its decay: it may have stood unscathed for many successive centuries, or have been reduced by foreign or domestic injury to ruin; but in either state, it can only rivet the attention of the eye for a time, without making a permanent impression upon the mind. Man naturally looks to his brother man: it is the *who*, not the *what*, that rouses the active inquiry. Thus, in traversing the Roman Forum, beautiful and full of grace and majesty as are the remains on every side, they would call forth comparatively cold admiration, were they unaccompanied with the reminiscences of former times, the many important events they witnessed, the glory of the Roman state, the reflection that here Cicero pleaded, and here Horace lounged. In like manner, if it be allowable to compare small things with great, it is in Sir John Fastolfe and the Pastons, that the interest of Caister lies centered. The character of the former, however incorrectly drawn or unjustly acquired, is far from being confined to Caister, or Norfolk, or Britain, but is known wherever the English language extends. Of such a man, therefore, it cannot but be interesting to be made acquainted with whatever may relate to his habits and mode of life; and with such feeling, the following additional particulars are borrowed from this curious inventory.

Immediately upon looking at the document, the reader cannot fail to be struck with the extraordinary quantity of coin and bullion, and silver and gold in various forms, contained in the castle, as indicating a state of society altogether unlike the present—a state, in which the absence of commerce and manufactures and a national debt, drove the possessors of the precious metals to hoard them in their chests, or display them in their buffet, for want of easy and profitable investment. Thus Sir John Fastolfe, at his banquets, was able to make his table glitter with two hundred and fifty-one "chargeours, disshes, and platters" of silver or silver-gilt; while one hundred and eleven drinking-vessels, "flagons, gallon cuppes, quartelets, bowles, and gobletes," might be ranged by their side; and spice-plates, ewers, and silver and gilt candlesticks, were producible in like abundance. Nor, in addition to such articles as these, which claimed to be of necessary use, did the board lack the splendid salt-cellars already alluded to, reared up into the form of castles, or spreading out into foliage; or others, which, like the "founteyne all gilt, with j columbine floure at the bottom," could have served no other purpose than the gratification of the eye or of the pride of rank. Skill of workmanship and variety of ornament must have greatly enhanced the costliness of the material; and in the description of the foliage, the violets and poppy-leaves, and the roses, &c., which were enamelled or embossed upon the vessels, the mind reverts to the illustrations of missals, and to the graceful capitals and mouldings of ecclesiastical edifices. As might be naturally expected, "my masteris helmet, arms, and target," present themselves in frequent repetition: the helmet formed the "knop," by which to raise the "kever or

coveracle of a stondynge cuppe:" the target was carved "in the middes of a bolle;" and the arms were enamelled in the large spice-plates, whose verges were gilt, and "wrethyn with a tre, wrought about with leaves." The columbine flower and antelope, also often mentioned, found in Sir John's eyes favor beyond what resulted from their own intrinsic elegance and grace; for they were badges of the House of Lancaster and of Margaret of Anjou. Perhaps they had been bestowed as tokens of royal approbation, by sovereigns whose battles the knight had helped to win; or perhaps they were adopted by himself as mementoes of those days of glory, when fortune seemed for a time to have forgotten her fickleness, and to have attached herself unchangeably to his banner. The notice of one other article of plate must not be omitted. Though of a description less elegant than those already mentioned, it is highly remarkable for its singularity. It is described in the inventory as *"j Roste Iren, having vjj staves, and j folding stele of silver:"* the construction may not be easy to understand; but a toasting-fork, if such it were, of silver, weighing seventy-three ounces, must have been a culinary instrument of a splendid description.

In the enumeration of the wardrobe, the very form and fashion of the gowns, doublets, jackets, and hoods, as well as their material, color, trimming, and lining, are carefully recorded. Sir John must surely "have dazzled the eyes and bewildered the brain" of the fair dames of the city, when, in gown of cloth of gold, he glanced along the streets, or when, robed in "rede felwett, or blewe felwett furrid with martyrs [martins], and wrought with gold at the edge," he doffed his hood of russett, or his "hatte of bever, lyned with damaske gilt." His

accoutrements, too, for sporting, are all detailed in the list. For these he would often lay aside his courtly robes, and exchange the jacket of "sateyne fugre" [figured] for one of "derys lether" or camlet; and in "hosyn of lether or blakke keyrse," would ride forth amid his tenants and retainers, with hawk on hand, the foremost of the group.

Among the banners, the pennons, and coat-armour, stand foremost those that bore the image of St. George, his patron as Knight of the Garter, and those embroidered with his own bearings. To two "cote-armours of silk aftir his own armys," and two "pencellis [pennons] of rede satayne branden [braided] with *me faunt fere*," (his motto), succeed one "cote-armour of whyte silke of Seynt George," probably his suit of state, and one "piece of Seynte George," apparently embroidered for a standard. The description of the weapons, both offensive and defensive, throw much curious light upon the armour of that period. There were "Jakkes of blakke lynen and blakke cloth, stuffid with mayle," and even with "horne;" "glovys of mayle, of schepe-skynne and of does;" haubergeons of Milan steel; helmets with "visers and ventayletts," "epaulesons," "gardes-de-bras and avant-bras," "cuisses" for the thighs, and "grevys" for the legs. Thus, a picture is afforded of the whole knight glittering in complete panoply, armed literally cap-à-pié, and burnished up to speckless brightness. The weapons for attack correspond in their weight and uncouthness with the ponderous coating of metal that encumbered the man at arms: the cross-bows could not be brought to act without a previous winding by "grete dowble windlases;" the "quarrelles" were "of grete sorte, feddered with brasse;" and even the "gounes"

[guns], tremendous enough in themselves, were formed into imitation of serpents, dragons, or gryphons, to render them yet more formidable. It is interesting to observe, that amidst all the weapons enumerated, those intended for Sir John's hand alone, possessed no adventitious ornament: his own dagger and sword are simply described as embossed or gilt at the hilt, and twisted about with silver on the haft. One "littell schort armyng dager," with a gilt scabbard, had probably been a favorite companion, and may have served in dress, as an elegant finish to his attire.

Amongst the articles of furniture, none are more striking for their elaborateness or variety than the tapestry. Nearly fifty different draperies of arras once clothed the now bare and rough walls of Caister Castle; and such was the diversity of their subjects, that scarcely a class of designs can be named, that does not find its symbol among them. There were "the Adoration of the Schipherds," and "the Assumption of oure Ladye," as mentioned by Mr. Amyot, for sacred history; "the jx conquerouris," for profane; "the geyaunt and wodewose," for romance; "a huntyng of the bore and a man with a blode-hounde," typical of rural sports; whilst the more gentle scenes which tranquillise the mind and refresh the eye, were plentifully depicted in peaceful landscapes, "full of popelers," and peopled with knights and squires, and groupes of "gentilwomen crowned, with hawkes or whelps in their hondes, and Agnus Days abought their necs." Amidst all these varied subjects, it may be easily imagined, there was not one on which the owner of the mansion looked with equal pride,—no, not even on the "clothe of rede with iij white roses and the armys of Fastolfe,"—as on the

stirring representation of the siege of Falaise, in which were pourtrayed his own exploits, and which, stretched out before him on the sides of his great hall, could not fail continually to awaken associations he loved to renew.

In the concluding part of the inventory is an enumeration of the twenty-six bed-chambers in the mansion, as also of the more important apartments, and of the articles of furniture they contained. The pillows, stuffed with lavender, and covered with red, purple, and gold velvet, wrought with escutcheons, blue lilies, and other fanciful devices, are particularly remarkable for their ornament; yet are they not disgraced by the counterpanes furred with minever, and the "conyngs" stretched over the beds, or by the testors and draperies, embroidered with every fancy of art, and tinted with every hue of the rainbow. It is affecting to observe, amid the copious stores of the splendid wardrobe, many pieces of un-made material, designed to cover a body, for which one scant garment had already become robe enough. The provision "laid up for many years," of velvets, satins, and fine linen, perhaps but once worn, or probably never even shaped out for wear, cannot but call forth a mental glance at the change wrought upon the outward and inward condition of their owner, what time this list of his possessions was compiled. On the other hand, a smile,—not, however, unaccompanied with a sigh,—will arise, on finding in the account of some of the articles, that they were little esteemed, because they were "of the olde facion." "Olde facioned," in the lips of those who barely had reached the midway between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries! How truly is language conventional! As a final remark, attention may justly be claimed for the "wafer-irons,"

used for impressing the sign of the cross upon the consecrated bread; the bottles of leather, in the buttery, for holding liquor; and the stores of salted herring, eels, and ling, deposited in the larder,—all indicative of the times, or characteristic of the nature of the country in which the castle was situated.

Such, in lands and goods, were the possessions with which John Paston, eldest son of Sir William, found himself on a sudden enriched. Still, between the stretching out of a hand to grasp them, and the actually having of them in firm hold, the new heir was soon made conscious there was a wide difference. Within one week after Sir John Fastolfe's death, and well nigh before his body was committed to the tomb, it appears that formidable pretenders to the property had already arisen. Among such was royalty itself, asserting its claims through the medium of the Lord Treasurer.* Doubtless, the exchequer was low; and perhaps it is not wonderful, therefore, that its guardian, though, as the letter expresses it, "he spoke fair to Sir John's executors," yet "labored to entitle the king in the goods."† The same letter tells of another claimant for the Southwark property, in the person of Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter,‡ who "even

* The Treasurer then was Henry, Viscount Bourchier, created Earl of Essex in 1461, the first year of the reign of Edward the fourth. He was a man of much knowledge and application to business, and filled many of the great offices of state. He was uncle to the king by his marriage with a sister of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York.

† *Paston Letters*, III., p. 355.

‡ See p. 57.—Henry was the third Duke of Exeter of this powerful, but unfortunate, family. His grandfather, who first enjoyed the title, was deprived of it and beheaded by Henry the fourth. He himself was, nevertheless, a stout partisan of the Lancastrian interest, in the person of Henry the sixth, by whom his father had been reinstated in his

purposed to have forthwith entered," and, when baffled in that attempt, declared "he would sue by means of the law." A year afterwards, report announced that "Richard, Duke of Gloster, should have Caister;" and so did the castle, on two occasions, narrowly escape the perilous glory of becoming a royal possession. The claimant, however, most to be dreaded,—because, with great wealth he enjoyed extensive influence, and more leisure in which to pursue his claims than either of his princely competitors,—was the Duke of Norfolk, whose retainers comprehended the greater part of the "men of East-Anglia," and whose possessions were almost of unbounded extent in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. The reader has already been introduced to this nobleman, as one of Fastolfe's correspondents, and even as a guest at Caister.* He now desired no less than to possess the mansion he had previously seen and admired; and it would seem he thought, as many have done, that, openly and fearlessly to assert his right, would be the surest means of causing it to be acknowledged. Reports had, even in the life-time of his friend, whispered the possibility of such a contingency. Lady Paston had heard with alarm, that "my Lord of Norfolk saith Sir John hath given him Caister, and that he will have it plainly;" and she had instantly communicated the rumour to her son, whose interests it so vitally affected, telling him forthwith to weigh the danger that threatened, and give all diligence to place himself on his guard.

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honors; and under that prince he was made Constable of the Tower of London, and Lord High-Admiral of England, Ireland, and Aquitaine for life. After the battle of Barnet, he fled into France, where he lived many years in exile, in great distress; and was finally found dead (having been most probably murdered) in the sea, between Calais and Dover.

* See p. p. 41 and 45, *supra*.

Caister, in falling into the hands of the Pastons, had not been given over to those, who were either unworthy to possess, or unable to defend it. East-Anglia could boast, at the period of Fastolfe's decease, but few families more honored for their virtues, or more respected for their power. Their pedigree they traced to the Norman times, when Woolstan, founder of the line, obtained a grant of lands at Paston, a village on the north-east coast of Norfolk, and, after the custom of those days, assumed the name of his lordship. Here he settled; and here his descendants continued to reside; each successive generation increasing in possessions, and consequently in influence. But as with nations, so with families—for what, indeed, is a nation, but a family of larger growth?—both have their infancy and old age, with all the intervening stages; both, their prosperity and their decay; both, their rise and fall: both, "tolluntur in altum, ut casu graviore ruant;" and this was strikingly the case with the Pastons. At their zenith in the fifteenth century, they from that period declined; and a few unimportant remains of their mansion are now the only outward and visible signs of their by-gone greatness, except the monuments in the inconspicuous village church.* Yet, no longer ago than the time of

* Among the funeral mementoes of the Pastons, still remaining in Paston church, is a fine marble monument to Lady Katharine Paston, wife of Sir Edmund, erected by Nicholas Stone, a statuary of eminence in his day. Lady Katharine died in 1628: and in 1629, the following entry occurs in Stone's memorandum-book. "I made a tomb of my Lady Paston, of Norfolk, and set it up at Paston, and was very extraordinarily entertained there, and payed for it £340."—By the side of this monument stands that to Sir Edmund, her husband, likewise of marble, and likewise executed by Stone, who placed it there in 1633; and for it received £100. The brass plates have been removed from

Blomefield, the windows of Paston Hall were bright with escutcheons, whose quarterings held forth to view the noble alliances which its owners had formed. Thirty-two of these emblazoned shields are enumerated by him:* and there then, likewise, existed considerable portions of the buildings. A buttery-hatch, the great hall, and two courts, are particularly enumerated in his work; as well as the chambers above the hall and chapel, which, however, he acknowledges were in a ruined state. The work of decay must have subsequently proceeded more rapidly; for the apartments just mentioned have now all disappeared, and a gate-house, with its arch bricked up, and a few ornamented turrets or chimneys, and a barn of ample proportions, bearing date 1588, and recording Sir William Paston as its founder, alone are left to mark the dwelling-place of a family, whose members received the homage of a long train of dependents. †

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two altar-tombs which commemorate other members of the family; but that for Erasmus Paston, with his effigy, still exists; though the figure of his wife, which was by its side, is gone. The inscription beneath them tells that she was a daughter of Sir Thomas Windham; and the escutcheons above their heads display the arms of Windham and of Paston, with numerous other quarterings: Erasmus Paston died in 1538.

* *History of Norfolk*, VI., p. 492.

† A figure of the ruins of Paston Hall, as they stood in 1823, is given on the title-page of the fifth volume of the *Paston Letters*; and it is evident, as well from this, as from the short description subjoined, that much of the building has been removed, even in the brief interval between that period and the present. Supposing the plate to be correct, there then existed more than one gateway; and fragments of Gothic architecture,—perhaps they had belonged to a chapel or an arched hall,—were scattered among the modern farm-buildings and the fine old trees.

Two remarkable facts are mentioned in the *Paston Papers*, illustrative of the estimation in which this family was held by persons of the highest distinction. Elizabeth of York, wife of John Delapole, Duke of Suffolk, and sister of Edward the fourth and of Richard the third, was purposing to visit London, but was unprovided with a lodging, and did not consider a hostelry as a fitting place of sojourn for a princess. In her dilemma, she had recourse to Fastolfe's heir, and made application to him, as follows:—"Master Paston, I pray you, that it may please you to leave your lodging for three or four days, till I may be purveyed of another; and I shall do as much for your pleasure: I pray you, say me not nay.*"—It surely marks the simplicity of the times, that a lady of this exalted rank should not only be compelled, on coming to the metropolis of her brother's dominions, to beg a temporary residence at the house of one not even enrolled among the nobility, but should find herself necessitated to urge her suit in terms of entreaty. The applicant, on the other occasion, was Katharine, Duchess of Norfolk, daughter of Ralph, first Earl of Westmoreland, and grand-daughter of John of Gaunt. She, likewise, was willing to be similarly indebted to John Paston, and indeed, her request is the same in substance; but, apparently, she desired a longer occupation, and proposed to pay for her lodgings. "Right trusty, and entirely well-beloved," she says, "we greet you as heartily as we can; and for as much as we purpose to be at London within brief time, we pray you that your place there may be ready for us; for we will send our stuff thither before our coming; and

* *Paston Letters*, II., p. 293.

such agreement as we took for the same, we will duly perform it.*"

The earliest member of the Paston family, whose history interweaves itself with that of Sir John Fastolfe, and consequently of Caister, was the Sir William, already often mentioned in these pages.† He was born in 1378, and bred to the law, pursuing which, he was promoted to the office of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. In that capacity he attracted the especial favor of Henry the sixth, who, in addition to the ordinary salary of his station, granted him one hundred marcs and two robes per annum. His marriage with Agnes, daughter and heiress of Sir Edmund Berry, of Harlingbury Hall, in Hertfordshire, brought him, at once, large accessions in wealth and lands, and with them, the support derived from an alliance with some of the most ancient families in Norfolk,—the Hethersets, Waxhams, Gerbridges, Hengraves, and Kerdestons. No ordinary share of the better and nobler possessions of honor and esteem, seems likewise to have fallen to his portion; for although he does not personally figure among the writers in the *Paston Correspondence*, yet are there many letters from his widow and his sons, that testify to the reverence with which his memory was regarded. He died in 1444, at the age of sixty-six, fifteen years previously to the death of Sir John Fastolfe, with whom he had lived in habits of much friendly intimacy. The courses of their respective lives had, indeed, been altogether different;—the one, leading through peaceful scenes of sunny ease at home; the other, through a chequered vista of changeful brightness in foreign lands;—yet, born

* *Paston Letters*, III., p. 18. † See p. 46, *supra*, and elsewhere.

and bred in the same neighborhood, representatives of families of much the same standing, connected also by affinity, and nearly of the same age, they had invariably preserved the intercourse of mutual regard and esteem.

The care of Sir William's numerous family,—for he left five sons and a daughter,—devolved upon his widow, the Lady Agnes, whose character is displayed in full relief, by her own letters. She was a stirring, active, dame; one that held no slack hand over her children, who, as some of them were then grown to man's estate, whilst others were yet in their infancy, can have been no light charge to a widowed mother. The following document from her hand strongly elucidates the tone and turn of her mind, and affords, at the same time, a curious picture of domestic life in those days. It purports to be a "Minute of errands to be executed in London," and bears date 1457, the thirteenth year of her widowhood. The subject she had evidently most at heart, was the education of her youngest son, Clement, who, though only fourteen or fifteen years old, had been already a resident at Cambridge, but was at that time in the metropolis, under the care of his tutor. The memorandum thus commences:—"Item: to pray Greenfield to send me word faithfully by writing, how Clement Paston hath done his endeavour in learning. And, if he hath not done well nor will not amend, pray him *that he will truly belash him*, till he amend; and so did the last master, and the best that ever he had, at Cambridge. And say [tell] Greenfield that, if he will take upon him to bring him into good rule and learning, I will give him ten marcs for his labour; for I had lever [rather] he were fairly buried, than lost for default.—Item,—to see how many gowns Clement hath;

and they that be bare, let them be raised [have a new nap set upon them.]—He hath a short green gown, and a short muster-develers* gown, which were never raised; and a short blue gown, that was raised, and made of a side gown,† when I was last in London; and a side russet gown, furred with beaver, was made this time two years; and a side murrey gown, was made this time twelvemonth."

To these weighty considerations concerning her son, follow sundry hints, touching advice to be given to Elizabeth, her only daughter, who, in compliance with the prevailing custom of the times, which placed young persons of good condition as wards in the houses of the great,‡ was educated in that of Lady Pole. At the close, however, of the memorandum, Lady Paston's mind reverts to its former channel; and her last item stands thus:—"and, if Greenfield have done well his devoir to Clement, or will do his devoir, give him the noble.—Agnes Paston."§

Poor Clement is here held forth in but an unpromising light; nor, from his mother's expressions, could any bright anticipations be cherished of his future attainments. Yet still, it may fairly be inferred, that Greenfield did in the end earn the noble, and that his luckless pupil either escaped the "belashing" by timely

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* Sir John Fenn, in his notes upon the *Paston Letters*, conjectures that this word may refer to the name of some place in France, where the cloth was manufactured. He seems also disposed, by a rather labored etymology, to derive the uncouth term from *Mestier de Velours*, half velvet, and casts a hint at the unsettled orthography of the times, and the incorrectness of female spelling.

† A *side gown* probably means a long gown, or one with sleeves.

‡ See p. 26, *supra*. § *Paston Letters*, 1, p. 143–147.

amendment, or derived the hoped-for profit from the merited chastisement; for, happily for the lad, one letter from his own hand is found in the family correspondence; and this, dated 1461, when he could scarcely have been more than eighteen or nineteen years old, shows that he then wrote both well and wisely, and even quoted Latin!

Another anecdote of Lady Paston agrees with the tenor of her directions concerning her son, and marks, perhaps, more strongly still, the rough manners of the day. Her daughter had displeased her by some tenacity of opinion, in matters, wherein a young maiden of the fifteenth, or even of the nineteenth century, little loves to yield. And, what was the course her mother pursued?—This appears but too clearly, from the following piteous representation, addressed to the elder brother of the family, by their mutual cousin, Elizabeth Clere:—"My cousin, your sister, was never in so great sorrow as she is now-a-days; for she may speak with no man, whosoever come, nor with servants of her mother's; and she hath since Easter *been beaten once in the week or twice, and sometimes twice in a day, and her head broken in two or three places.*"

Allusion has already been made to the principal difficulties and dangers which beset and threatened John Paston, upon his altered situation on the death of Fastolfe; but these, however formidable, were far from all. Not only was he unable to establish a primâ facie right to the property, by virtue of lineal descent, but he was not even nearly related to the deceased; nor did he bear the same name. Hence a multiplicity of involvements.—It was in the first place positively asserted that the title-deeds of the estates could nowhere be found. Then arose Thomas Fastolfe of Congshaw, the kinsman and ward of

the late knight;* and he, without hesitation, laid claim to the property, and in support of his claim, appealed to the Duke of Norfolk; so that John Paston himself was driven to a similar expedient, and both sent their messengers to Framlingham, to enlist so powerful an auxiliary in their behalf.† Well pleased was his Grace to

* See p. 39, *supra*.

† The fact appears by a letter from John Calle, Paston's messenger on the occasion, dated the fifth of June, 1461, preserved in the *Paston Correspondence*, IV., p. 6. In the same year,—but it does not seem to be known in what part of it,—the Duke of Norfolk, Fastolfe's friend and correspondent, died. Most probably, therefore, the mission, of which Calle gives some interesting particulars, was made to his son and heir, in whom the Mowbray line terminated. With him, it is certain the overt acts of hostility originated; and it was he who, eight years afterwards, besieged and took the castle of Caister. Both father and son were decided partisans of the White Rose. The former was one of the leaders of Edward's army at the battle of Towton, the bloodiest that had been fought in England since the Conquest, and was created by the king Justice Itinerant of all the Forests on the south side of the Trent. His successor attained to the still higher honor of Marshal of England, in which capacity he presided at the trial of the Duke of Somerset, and the Prior of St. John of Jerusalem, and other Lancastrian chiefs. Of Framlingham castle, in its present state, it may justly be said, that "Stat magni nominis umbra." The *shell* remains in great measure perfect, and is one of the most imposing ruins to be seen. Over the principal gateway is still preserved an escutcheon, charged with the arms of Howard, Brotherton, Warren, Mowbray, Segrave, and Brews. But nearly all the outworks are destroyed; and the interior, completely gutted, now serves for the parish work-house and alms-houses. Even here, however, traces of Norman architecture denote the time of the erection of the building, though probably of no considerable part of the present walls. The work of devastation does not appear to have been carried into effect till the castle fell into the hands of Sir Robert Hitcham, in 1635. Only eighty-two years previously it was a royal domain and residence: King Edward had bestowed it upon his sister, Mary, who selected it as the place of her retreat, during the short interval between the death of her brother and her own accession to the throne.

FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE, SUFFOLK.

be thus constituted umpire by both parties; and well did he flatter himself not to have learned for nought the fable of "the Judge and the Oyster," but resolved, whilst he should award a shell in either hand to the litigants, to reserve for himself the substantial fish. His first measure was worthy of this design: he stationed three men of his own at Caister, under pretext of securing the castle; and having got it safe in his hold, he wrote forthwith to the king, to impugn the validity of the claims of both, and to put forward the justice of his own.

The legal heir, meanwhile, hastened to London, carrying with him such muniments as he could collect. But he had ever been an avowed partizan of the House of Lancaster; and an unfortunate publicity had not long before been given to the circumstance, by his lady's having been admitted to an interview at Norwich with the Queen of Henry the sixth, on which occasion she had been treated with much favor by that ill-fated princess. The claims, therefore, of such an appellant were little likely to find grace in the eyes of Edward of York; and more especially when placed in opposition to those of an antagonist like Mowbray. There was still nothing better to be done than linger on at court, a suitor for royal favor and an applicant for the justice of the law. His wife, in the interim, remained in Norfolk, observing the movements of their enemies, and harassed with unceasing solicitude. In her distress she constantly transmitted to him tidings of what was going on at home: she at one time tells him that the priests within their college at the castle were narrowly watched and put in peril of life: at another, stirred with affectionate concern on his behalf, she conjures him to procure a termination of his suspense. With urgent entreaties,

she writes, " Sloth not your matters now, but make an end of them. Either purvey you to make or mar them in haste; for this is too horrible a cost and trouble that ye have and have had, for to endure any while; and it is great heaviness to your friends and well-wishers, and great comfort and joy to your enemies. My Lord of Norwich [Walter Hart, Bishop of Norwich] said to me that he would not abide the sorrow and trouble that ye have abiden, to win all Sir John Fastolfe's goods. God be your speed."*

As time wore on, the various rivals that had started to claim the different portions of Fastolfe's possessions, dropped off, tired out with litigation and delay. The Duke of Norfolk alone remained; and, strong in hand, strong in purse, and strong in influence, he presented a claimant, whom even the king probably felt at once afraid and unwilling to oppose. And yet, when urged on the other hand by Paston's friends, Edward not only declared his determination to be impartial, but caused a distinct message to be conveyed to the eldest son, who, through the medium of the Lord-Treasurer, pleaded his father's cause in the royal ear,—that " the King saith he will be your good Lord herein, as he would be to the poorest man in England: he will hold with you in your right; and, as for favor, he will not be understood that he will show more to one than to another,—not to one in England."† In all such assurances, however, there was but too probably more of sound than of meaning; for Caister, as William of Worcester described it in a letter to Mrs. Paston, was " a rich jewel at need, for all the country in time of war;"—and those

* *Paston Letters*, IV., p. 167. † *Paston Letters*, IV., p. 49.

were truly times of war and of need likewise. They were times, too, which probably rendered the sovereign more than half disposed to commit a place of importance to a tried and powerful supporter like the Duke of Norfolk. The consequence was, that John Paston saw himself not only kept out of his property, but for a time deprived even of liberty, as ultimately of life. Vexatious accusations were preferred against him; and under the pretence of these he was thrown into the Fleet prison. There his captivity was not long: fatigue of mind and body preyed deeply on his health; and in 1466, after seven years of most precarious possession, a period of contest and of struggle, he died, worn out with care, at only forty-six years of age. The heir, and, it might be said, the owner of wide domains, he breathed his last, if not, like Buckingham,

> " In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung;
> " The floors of plaster, and the walls of dung:
> " On once a flock-bed, but repair'd with straw,
> " With tape-ty'd curtains, never meant to draw;
> " The George and Garter dangling from that bed
> " Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red;"

yet certainly in a temporary lodging-house; for such is the most favorable inference that can be drawn from the following entry in the statement left by his widow of the expenses attendant upon his funeral,—a statement full of curious details:*—" Item, a fee of twenty shillings, given for a reward to the keeper of the Inn, where myne husband died."

The body of the Lord of Caister was conveyed from London into Norfolk in sumptuous state; priests, dirge-singers, and torch-bearers attending all the way. The

* Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, VI., p. 485.

latter, twelve poor men, who each received a groat per diem during the six days employed upon the journey, were escorted by thirty-nine children, in surplices, to the church of St. Peter at Hungate,* in Norwich, where the corpse lay a considerable time exposed in state. During all this period, the bells incessantly tolled, the priests chaunted, and the four orders of friars watched near the coffin, and read aloud. Nor were gratuities wanting; for a sum of eight pounds was distributed amongst the monks that performed the service; while the thirty-eight priests received twelve shillings and eightpence; and twenty-three nuns, a groat a-piece. Still farther, twenty shillings-worth of wine was given to the singers; and even the surpliced boys, "within the scurche and without," (as the document expresses it,) had three shillings and fourpence to divide among them. Sweeping along, with equal state and cost, the procession held the even tenor of its way to Broomholm Priory,† its final resting-place. There, within the walls of that noble monastery, they deposited the object of their care; and then indeed the revelry and banqueting began. It can hardly fail of appearing to those of the present day wonderful, when they learn the scale upon which this system

* The name of this church is derived from its vicinity to one of the gates of the Episcopal Palace, near which the Bishop of Norwich kept his hounds; and they, in the first instance, imparted their name to the *Houndgate*, and then to the church of St. Peter, adjoining it.

† The remains of Broomholm Priory are situated within the parish of Bacton, on the north-east coast of Norfolk, and almost upon the edge of the sea-shore, where they form a well-known sea-mark for vessels approaching the coast. They lie about six miles from North Walsham, the nearest market-town, and about a mile and a half from Paston, which is the parish immediately adjoining towards the north.

of rioting—for such it cannot but have been—was conducted. For three continuous days, one man was engaged in no other occupation than that of flaying beasts; and provision was made of thirteen barrels of beer, twenty-seven barrels of ale, one barrel "of beer of the greatest assyze," and "a roundlet of rede wyne of xv gallons." All these, however, copious as they seem, proved inadequate to the demand; for the account goes on to state, that five coombs of malt at one time, and ten coombs at another, were brewed up expressly for the occasion. Meat, too, was in proportion to the liquor: the country round about must have been swept of geese, chickens, capons, and "such small gear," all which, with the thireen hundred eggs, the twenty gallons of milk and eight of cream, and the "forty-one pyggs, forty-nine calves, and ten nete" slain and devoured, give a fearful picture of the scene of "festivity" the abbey walls at that time beheld. Amongst such provisions, the article of bread bears nearly the same proportion as in Falstaff's bill of fare. The "one halfpennyworth" of the staff of life to the "inordinate quantity of sack," was acted over again in Broomholm Priory; but then, on the other hand, in matter of consumption, the torches, the many pounds' weight of wax to burn over the grave, and the separate candles of enormous stature and girth, form prodigious items.

On such an occasion, it is pleasant to find that almsgiving had not been omitted; and that, amongst all the above-enumerated goods "which perish in the using," some better treasure had been laid up in store. The opportunity was not let slip for enriching the churches of Bacton, Paston, Gresham, and other places in the vicinity; and not those alone, but twelve at a distance:

amongst them, Reedham steeple, which, at that time, was needing repairs, and halting for lack of funds. Indiscriminate largesses, too, however little calculated to do real good, were even more abundant: a sum no less than twenty pounds was changed from gold into smaller coin, that it might be showered amongst the attendant throng; and twenty-six marcs in copper had been used for the same object in London, before the procession began to move.

A few of the remaining items are rather amusing as well as curious; for, that a barber should have been occupied five days in smartening up the monks for the ceremony, affords a glimpse of earth and its vanities, which it could hardly be expected would have been seen within the convent's world-excluding precincts. Nor could any one, unaided, have imagined, that "the reke of the torches at the dirige" should, to such a degree, have filled the church and beclouded its atmosphere, as to require that the glazier should remove two panes from the windows, to give the mantling fumes opportunity to escape.

At length, having committed the body to the earth amidst all this encircling pomp, and having provided for the spirit's weal, by founding commemorative services in perpetuity, they remunerated the vicar of the neighboring parish of Wood-Dalling with eight shillings and fourpence for a pardon fetched from Rome, and gratified him, in addition, with the present of a black gown and cope, technically called a "frogge of worstead."

It seems very doubtful how far any monument was erected at Broomholm, over John Paston's remains. His eldest son, of the same name, inherited, together with the nominal title to his father's estates, a heavy burthen

RUINS OF BROOMHOLM PRIORY.

both of care and cost. He was harassed with anxiety all his life long, and was all his life long pressed also for money. It is on record that, twelve years after his father's death, the widow remonstrated with him on the little respect showed to the memory of the deceased, observing, "to see your father lie as he doth, is too great a shame to us all." How far he was influenced by these and similar remonstrances, is unknown; but certain it is, that he shortly after applied, by letter, for the exact measurements of the spot at Broomholm where the body was deposited, desiring to know "the thickness and compass of the pillar at his head, the space from thence to the altar, and the thickness of that altar and imagery of timber-work." Nay more,—he even obtained from his mother, upon the plea of converting it into money for the mausoleum, the pall of cloth of gold, which had been spread over his father's coffin, and had been originally purchased at a cost of twenty pounds. Broomholm, with its arches and altars, its shrines and its imagery, is now, like the neighboring convent of St. Bennet's, a mere wreck. The original plan of the building may, however, yet be traced in its remains, which cover a wide extent of ground. The gate-way is entire; and so late is the date of its architecture, that it can scarcely have been more than completed before it was thrown open to admit the spoilers. The north transept of the church is also comparatively uninjured; and, of Norman architecture, massy in its proportions, and simple and grand in its character, it presents a striking contrast to the elegant chapter-house, which, in its range of graceful arches, slender shafts, and undercut mouldings, exhibits a specimen of the chastest early English style. All around, the country is flat and unbroken; so that these ruins may be discerned

from a great distance, rearing themselves on high above the sandy tract of the shore, and displaying their irregular forms in fantastic lines against the sky. The founder was William de Glanville, a Norman chieftain in the reign of Henry the first; and to him the earliest portion of the building may doubtless be ascribed; but it was not till a later period, when a fragment of the *True Cross* was enshrined in the Abbatial Treasury, that pilgrims and offerings increased to such a degree, that additions were continually made to its buildings, and every part bore witness to the sanctity and the opulence of the establishment.

Upon the decease of John Paston, the care of no less than six sons devolved upon his widow; and, as the thread of the father's life had been cut short at the age of forty-six, the very oldest among them must have been comparatively in early youth. It is only with him and with his brother next in age, that this narrative has connexion. Both bore the same baptismal name with their father, and are known by no other in the records that have come down to the present times. Both, too, received the honor of knighthood; but the younger not till after the battle of Stoke, in Nottinghamshire, when his brother had already been removed by death; so that probably, during their lives—at least after they had attained to manhood—the difference of rank may have been considered sufficient to mark their respective identity.

Sir John, second of the Paston name, now become lord of Caister, was, in his time, a gallant soldier. Like Fastolfe, he took part in the wars of which France was then again the theatre, and passed the larger portion of his life in that country. Gay and courtly, he loved the society of the great; and, if it may be permitted to judge from

trifling intimations, was by no means unfavorably regarded among the youthful fair. A musk-ball presented to one bright damsel, a gold ring to another, and a flower or a stanza, laid before the feet of a third—these accord well with the sparkling apparel in which he confessed that he delighted, with the gallant grey horse he was wont to ride, and the retinue wherewith he commonly went attended. His name is to be found early after his father's death, in the proud list of lords and knights and squires of high degree, assembled at Bruges, to bear part in the splendid pageants with which the citizen-princes of that, then the greatest of commercial emporia, were striving to do honor to the alliance just formed between their sovereign, Charles the Bold, and the English princess whom he had associated in his throne. By that princess, Margaret of York, sister of King Edward the fourth, Sir John Paston had been selected to attend in her train, to conduct her into the Low Countries, and to see due honor done her. Yet did he not desert the Lancastrian cause; for, three years afterwards, he was present with his brother at the battle of Barnet, where the latter received an arrow-shot in the right arm. A letter is preserved from the knight to his mother, containing a description of the fight, and a list of the slain, and of the captured or wounded in the field. The death of the great Earl of Warwick in that battle, which was fought on the morning of Easter-Sunday, April 14, 1471, the self-same day the unfortunate Queen Margaret and her son landed in Dorsetshire, may be said to have been fatal to the cause of Henry; but it was not till after the more decisive defeat at Tewkesbury, and the murder of the young prince in the following month, that the Pastons, finding all hope at an end, repaired at last to Edward for pardon

and restoration to royal favor. This boon does not seem to have been withheld, either with rigor or pertinacity; for it appears that Sir John was shortly after admitted to the confidence of Lord Hastings, on whom the sovereign's bounty had begun largely to flow, and by him was taken to Calais, of which town that nobleman was governor. There, rejoicing in his patron's advancement to the Lord Chamberlainship of England and to other of the highest offices in the state, he continued to reside till his death, in 1479; an event which spared him the pain of witnessing, and probably sharing the tragical fate of Hastings, whom, only four years subsequently, the perfidious bloody tyrant, then on the throne, caused to be seized at the council-board, and carried off to execution without even the mock form of trial.

In thus speaking of the events of the close of the fifteenth century, the pen has considerably outrun the regular course of the narrative; and it is essential to return from the period of the death of Sir John Paston, to nearly that of his becoming possessed of the property. It is not to be denied, that Fastolfe is unquestionably the most important as well as the most interesting of the names to be found in conjunction with Caister: he was at once the builder of the castle, and the most powerful of its occupants,—set aside the halo spread around him by Shakspeare. But his very power prevented his mansion from being the scene of the same interesting occurrences during his lifetime, as happened in that of the son of his immediate successor. It was with him safe from the hand of the spoiler; safe even from the tongue of the claimant, and from the wiles of law. To all these it was now exposed; and, after what has already been stated, the reader will not be surprised to hear, that,

while Sir John Paston was in France, intent upon and immersed in his pleasures, his possessions in East-Anglia became placed in extreme jeopardy. He had left them on his departure in the charge of his mother and brother, who, however encompassed with many and various difficulties, seem most faithfully to have discharged the trust committed to their hands. Their enemies were powerful and resolute; and every source of disquiet they endured, was aggravated by the scantiness of needful funds. They continually wrote letters to Sir John, earnestly intreating supplies of men and money, together with directions how to act; and their solicitations were no less continually met with demands for remittances out of the proceeds of his lands, to keep up his state at Calais, and to maintain the splendor that was essential to his happiness.

Truckling, also, and underhand dealing were to be encountered by the tenants of the castle, as well as open violence; and from a quarter least to be expected. Thomas Howys, the same who was Sir John Fastolfe's chaplain and one of the executors of his will, having fallen into disagreement with the Pastons, made offer to the Duke of Norfolk to sell him the estate of Caister, affirming that he had power so to do. The same overture he had previously submitted to Thomas Bourchier, the cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury; and, the better to recommend his object to the ecclesiastical character of his correspondent, had professed a burning zeal for the pious objects which Fastolfe had contemplated, and had gone so far as to declare, that this was his main actuating motive. The Duke of Norfolk, however, paid no money for Caister; and, moreover, needed to pay none; at least, none to Howys, or to any one, by way

of purchase. Money he did pay; but, long before it arrived at Caister, the gold had been transmuted into a far less welcome metal, in the form of arrow-heads, spears, and blades. At the head of a chosen band of his armed retainers, he marched without delay to the easternmost point of Norfolk; but before he issued orders to his men to attack the walls and towers, or actually to invest the place, he made halt at Yarmouth, and thence, at the invidious distance of only three miles, summoned the rightful owners to depart from the castle, and surrender the estate, in the words of the following haughty manifesto:—"Whereas, John Paston, Esquire, and other diverse persons, have, against the peace, kept the manor of Caister with force, against the will and intent of us, the Duke of Norfolk, to our great displeasure. Which notwithstanding (at the writing of the most worshipful and reverend Father in God, the Cardinal of England, and our most trusty and entirely beloved uncle, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the right noble Prince, my Lord of Clarence, and other Lords of our blood, and also at the great labour and instance of our most dear and singular-beloved wife) we be agreed that the said John Paston and his said fellowship shall depart and go out of the said manor without delay, and make deliverance thereof to such persons as we will assign; the said fellowship having their lives and goods, horse and harness, and other goods, being in the keeping of the said John Paston, except guns, cross-bows, and quarrels, and to have fifteen days' respite after their said departing out, to go into what place shall like them.—Given under our signet at Yarmouth, the twenty-sixth-day of September, the ninth year of King Edward the fourth, (1468.)"

A summons like this, subscribed by a name so justly to be dreaded as Norfolk, must have fallen with startling sound upon the ears of the party within the castle. Neither did it find them in a condition to disregard its message; for, while on the exterior of the walls there were enemies, confusion and disobedience reigned within their circuit. Mrs. Paston had been made to learn by experience, that it was no easy task for a female, to maintain due discipline among a garrison, collected for the defence of the property of another. In her perplexity she had written in plaintive terms to Sir John, telling him,—and no wonder,—that she "could not well guide nor rule soldiers; and, moreover, that they set not by a woman, as they should set by a man." She had, besides, entreated her second son to come quickly to her aid—a summons he appears to have lost no time in obeying; and she had further begged that more soldiers, and "of a grave and sober character," might be sent. So cruel an emergency was this for a lady and widow to be placed in, that it would truly be a hard heart that would not rejoice that assistance was promptly rendered, and that those dispatched to her aid were really "grave and well-assured men." The reinforcement proceeded from her eldest son, the knight, who made the men at arms bearers of a letter to his mother, wherein he enlarged on their good qualities, and bespoke her courtesy in their behalf. He assures her, "they be proved men, mother, men cunning in the war and in feats of arms; and they can well shoot both guns and cross-bows, and amend and string them; and they will, as need is, keep watch and ward. They be also sad [serious] and well-advised men, saving one of them, called William Peny: he will, as I understand, be a little copschotyn [high-

crested]; but yet he is no brawler, but full of courtesy."* Sir John requests his mother to allow them a supply of armour, and the loan of two beds among the four; adding, to the poor lady who was to hold the curb over this *copschotyn* stranger, "ye shall find them gentlemen-like, comfortable fellows;" men far better fitted to defend the place, than the tenants from the neighboring country, who "should be frayed for fear of loss of their goods."

Whilst dangers were thus thickening around his birthright, and Sir John, though far away, was endeavoring to meet them by force of arms, he still had not neglected to seek the aid of other, not less powerful, albeit less warlike support. He had bethought himself of means for conciliating the favor of the king;—means cunning and well devised, and such as long-established precedent might afford him hopes would prove successful. He flattered himself he might find access to the royal consort, Queen Elizabeth Woodville, through her confessor, Master John Yotton, whose influence was doubtless extensive. A vacancy had befallen at Caister, in the chaplaincy of Fastolfe's chapel; and Dr. Yotton

* Of the four soldiers here alluded to, so honorable a mention is made at the close of the siege, by John Paston, the commander of the garrison, that it seems an act of injustice not to record their names. They were John Chapman, who appears to have been the leader (the rest being mentioned as "his fellows;" William Peny, whose propensities and habits receive here an especial notice; James Halman, and Robert Jack's Son. They not only seem to have merited all the courtesy bespoken in their favor previously to their arrival, but to have likewise earned for their bravery grateful acknowledgments. John Paston writes, concerning them, to his brother Sir John,—"as for John Chapman and his fellows, I pray you give them their thank; for, by my troth, they have as well deserved it as any men that ever bore life."

was immediately presented.* Thus, by this stroke of policy, the desired avenue was laid open; but yet, even here, in a juncture so peculiarly critical, it is amusing to see how closely the love of money adhered, and how a desire to strike a bargain crept in. "To have a priest to sing at Caister," was a good thing; and, to have *that* priest, was more especially so; but, best of all, was it to have him on reasonable terms, and "to compound with him, ere he wist what the value were." So, whilst the confessor was coming down, under the belief that he was to receive for his salary a hundred shillings a-year, Sir John had hinted to his brother that forty would be an ample remuneration, and had required that the new incumbent should be paid no more than his predecessors.

Other influential friends also lent their aid to support the tottering fortune of the Pastons; and amongst them, none were more active than the immediate relatives of the queen. Richard Woodville, Lord Rivers, her father,† and Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales,‡ her brother, both

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* See p. 42, *supra*, *Note*.

† Lord Rivers was raised to the dignity of an earl in the fifth of Edward the fourth, and together with his son, John, lost his life only four years afterwards, on the insurrection of the Lancastrians under Robin of Ridsdale. He was a man of great accomplishments; and England is partly indebted to him for the introduction of printing.

‡ This nobleman, second son and heir of Earl Rivers, was appointed the governor of his nephew, the Prince of Wales, and fell a sacrifice to his attachment to that prince. Shortly after the murder of the young king and his brother in the Tower, the Duke of Gloster caused Lord Scales to be thrown into prison in Pomfret castle; and there, without delay, he was beheaded, in company with Lord Grey, the queen's son by her first husband, Sir Thomas Vaughan, and Sir Richard Hawte. Their bodies were buried naked in the monastery of the same place. Thomas, Lord Scales, grandfather of the nobleman here mentioned, built Middleton

espoused their cause, and pleaded it strongly with the king. Personal feeling, doubtless, in this instance, lent its aid to animate their exertions; for, in addition to the preferment bestowed on Yotton, Sir John Paston, by an intended marriage with a relation of the Woodville family, had gone far to identify his interests with theirs. The marriage, indeed, though fully sanctioned by all parties, never actually took place; and why it was abandoned, is a mystery the *Family Letters* do not help to unravel. Thus much alone they tell—that the lady's name was Mistress Anne Hawte, and that to her the knight addressed stanzas, and made presents,—but that, after a time, both presents and stanzas were alike discontinued, and the passion seemed to cool: nevertheless, as the faithless lover died at an early age, no successor to fair Mistress Anne was ever found to fill her place.

Vain, however, were the efforts of Lord Rivers and Lord Scales, and vainly did even the monarch himself warn the Duke to pursue gentle measures at Caister, and to desist from felling trees, committing devastations, and offering violence. Too many "long years of havoc had urged their destined course," for the reign of Edward the fourth to be a period, when the warnings of sovereigns were wont to be regarded: at least, if supported by no weightier arguments than pen and ink, and paper and parchment.

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castle, in Norfolk, which remained for several generations the seat of the family. The gate-house of this edifice now alone stands entire; but ruins of other portions of the building mark its extent and its quadrangular form, enclosing a large area, and surrounded by a moat. A shield, marked with the six escallop shells of argent, the armorial bearings of Scales, may yet be seen above the archway of the entrance. Several letters from Lord Scales, in the *Paston Papers*, are dated from Middleton Castle.

Besides, the king was in London, and the duke safe on his own ground, in Norfolk. He therefore proceeded to issue orders that his manorial-court should be held at Caister, as in every manor rightfully his own. On the other hand, the younger Paston, though standing on ground to which he was more legally and justly entitled, within the walls of the castle, began to find that ground no entirely secure retreat. In his distress, he wrote to his brother, that now no resource was left him but to use "the first point in hawking," which was, "to hold fast, if he could." Sorrowfully, he observed, in addition, that it was all too late to apply to him for advice,—"wherefore," he says, "if I do well, I ask no thank; and if ill, I pray you lay the fault on over-little wit." Want of more weapons he also complains of, as likewise of the broken state of some the armoury contained: he tells of steel-bows out of repair and unuseable, and amongst these, of "Sir John's own great bow;" and, what is worst of all, he laments the utter absence of all means to supply the deficiencies.

Thus, then, matters were standing on either side, when, early in the autumn of 1469, at more than a twelvemonth's interval after he had first issued his manifesto, the duke began to apply to the taking of the castle in earnest. Its rightful owner was at a distance: his mother and brother, a few gentlemen, and a handful of soldiers, in all about twenty-eight, constituted the whole force of the garrison; and well, indeed, was it for them, that there were moats, and towers, and battlements; for, in addition to their numerical weakness, their stock of ammunition was low, and their funds at a lower ebb still. On the other hand, upon the side of their opponents, no resources of any kind were lacking. All was well appointed; and

four knights,* the flower of the families of the county, led on a band, three thousand strong, headed by his Grace himself, who, in person, conducted the attack.†

The particulars on record of the conduct of the siege, are scanty and meagre. Imagination must be chiefly called upon to supply the "circumstance and pomp of war." It would be interesting to know the number and weight of the pieces of ordnance, and how they were brought up, and what effect they produced: how the gateway was contested and the drawbridge; how moat after moat was gained; and how the valor alike of the besiegers and the besieged was displayed in the attack and defence. With none of these details, however, have we the privilege of being made acquainted by the pen of an eye-witness or a combatant: they are only to be beheld in the shadowy forms conjured up by the fancy. Thus much alone is known with certainty, that the whole month of September was consumed in hostile operations. The number of letters under the date of that month, is very small; but that is a circumstance far from unaccountable; for it needs only to be considered how the assailants must have watched to cut off communication from within, and how messengers on their way to the

* The names of the four knights who commanded the Duke of Norfolk's forces at Caister, were Sir John Heveningham, a descendent of an ancient family of the same name in Suffolk; Sir Thomas Wingfield, of Letheringham, in that county, an ancestor of Sir Anthony Wingfield, who was distinguished with the favor of Henry the eighth and Edward the sixth; Sir Gilbert Debenham, equally of an old and knightly Suffolk family; and Sir William Brandon, ancestor of Charles Brandon, afterwards Duke of Suffolk.

† Grose gives, at the close of his account of Caister Castle, a list of both the *besiegers* and *besieged*; and Blomefield likewise gives the same, XI., p. 209; but less complete.

besieged must have been liable to be plundered by the foe without the walls. A few documents have, notwithstanding, escaped; and, amongst these, are some from the pen of Sir John himself. The language he holds to his supporters is, as might be expected, of an encouraging tenor; exhorting them to resist to the utmost, and varying, with an admirable knowledge of human nature, the arguments adduced. Sometimes he expresses that solicitude for their safety, which, to a generous mind, would prove the strongest incentive to perseverance. He assures them that he "would lever [rather] the place were burned and they saved, than to enjoy the goodliest appointment in the kingdom." He "would very far rather lose the whole manor of Caister than jeopardy the simplest man's life within the precincts." Then, again, he lets drop a a hint, that, "in good faith, the matter lay nearer his heart than he could well trust himself to write of;" and, occasionally, he even goes so far as to declare that he "would not they should give up the place,—no, not for a thousand pounds,*—if they might any way keep it, and preserve their own lives."

* The mention of a sum of this magnitude in "so off-hand a way," sounds little short of ridiculous, when taken in connection with what has been already more than once stated of the want of money experienced by the Pastons. Such absolute pecuniary distress on the part of persons of family and fortune, seems almost inconceivable, especially considering the quantity left by Fastolfe. On no occasion was this penury more apparent than at the present juncture. Mrs. Paston informed her son by letter, that neither by pledging her goods, nor by entreating loans from friends, could she raise even ten pounds to support the garrison; and the knight met this statement with an avowal of still deeper poverty. He assures her, that ten solitary shillings formed the sum total of all he possessed in the world; and he added, pathetically enough, "I wot not where to get more, but have been in the same case, or worse, ten times during the last ten weeks."

Disproportionate as were the forces of the contending parties, it could not be, but that, as the assailants advanced, the distress sustained by those within was augmented in a fearful ratio. There remains a letter from Mrs. Paston, dated the twelfth of September, which shows their state; and most simple and touching is the strain in which she represents their condition :—

"*To Sir John Paston, Knight.*"—"I greet you well, letting you weet that your brother and his fellowship stand in great jeopardy at Caister, and lack victuals; and Dawbeney* and Berney† be dead, and divers others greatly hurt; and they fail gunpowder and arrows, and the place is sore broken with guns of the other party; so that, but [unless] they have hasty help, they belike to lose both their lives and the place, to the greatest rebuke to you that ever came to any gentleman; for every man in this country marvelleth greatly that ye suffer them to be so long in so great jeopardy, without help or other remedy. The Duke hath been more fervently set thereupon, and more cruel, since that Writtill,‡ my Lord of

* John Dawbeney, Esq., whose death is here mentioned, was a gentleman of good family in the county of Norfolk: he seems to have been much relied on by the Pastons, and perhaps was connected with them by marriage or kindred.

† As regards the death of Osbert Berney, (son of John Berney, Esq., of Reedham, in Norfolk,) Mrs. Paston was misinformed: perhaps he was seriously wounded; but certainly he did not meet with his death in this siege. He survived, and died without issue, several years afterwards, and was buried in the chancel of Braideston church, Norfolk, where a brass to his memory bears the following inscription :—"Hic jacet Osbertus, filius Joh: Berney, Armig: dns de Redeham and de Brayston."

‡ "Master Writtill," or Wrettel, was a messenger despatched by the Duke of Clarence to Caister, at a time when, by a truce, the urgency of

Clarence's man, was there, than he was before; and he hath sent for all his tenants, from every place, and others to be there at Caister on Thursday next coming; that there is then like to be the greatest multitude of people that came there yet; and they purpose then to make a great assault; for they have sent for guns to Lynn and other places by the sea-side; that, with their great multitude of guns, with other shot and ordnance, they shall hold them so busy with their great number of people, that it shall not lie in their power within to hold it against them, without God help them, or they have hasty succour from you. Therefore, as ye will have my blessing, I charge and require you that ye see your brother be holpen in haste; and if ye can have none other mean, rather desire writing from my Lord of Clarence, if he be in London, or else from my Lord Archbishop of York, to the Duke of Norfolk, that he will grant them that be in the place their lives and goods. And if ye think, as I can suppose, that the Duke of Norfolk will not agree to this, because he granted this afore and they in the place would not accept it, then I would that the said messenger should, with the letters, bring from the said Lord of Clarence, or else my Lord Archbishop, to

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the proceedings before the castle was for a season suspended: the object of the mission with which he was charged, was to mediate an accommodation between the parties. With him Sir John Paston communicated by writing; and in his judgment he appears to have reposed much trust. He addressed Writtill in his letters as "Right Worshipful Sir," and says to him, "wherefore all our welfare resteth in you: we have wholly put our trust in your discreet direction;" and again, at another time, he thanks him for the much labor he had undergone in the business, a labor, manifested by the event, to have been in its issue wholly unsuccessful.

my Lord of Oxford,* other letters to rescue them forthwith; though the said Earl of Oxford should have the place during his life for his labor. Spare not this to be done in haste, if ye will have their lives, and be set by [esteemed] in Norfolk, though ye should rather lose the best manor of all for the rescue: I had rather ye lost the livelihood, than their lives." Mrs. Paston furthermore adds, in the language of combined entreaty and command,—"do your devoir now; and let me send you no more messengers for this matter; but send me by the bearer hereof more certain comfort than ye have done by all others that I have sent before."

The address of the above letter, with the urgent words, "*in haste*," sufficiently shows the trepidation that dictated it. No speed, however, of the bearer, great though it might have been, could have made it reach its destination sufficiently early to enable the knight to take measures against the threatened attack. The cloud that had long been gathering, did actually burst the following Thursday, and burst with a fury that was overwhelming. Still, in that short interval, occupied and unhappy as she must necessarily have been, the lady found time and heart to write her son a second epistle, yet farther to prepare his mind to expect the worst as to the issue of the struggle.

* John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, a nobleman over whom the bright gleams and dark shades of life flitted in as rapid and fitful succession as over any individual, even in those stormy times. Born to the questionable inheritance of honors of which his father had been deprived, he was first restored to them, then attainted; and then they were forfeited, and afterwards restored anew. What not very commonly happened then to men so situated, he died in the possession of them, and of the character of a brave, wise, magnificent, learned, and religious man. His valour and prudence contributed much to the success of the Lancastrians at Bosworth.

His affairs, she expressly says, are verging to their ruin; yet is it with gentleness she imparts the tidings, and mixes with the unwelcome intelligence the most sound maternal advice. She entreats him to "search into his past life, there to discover, if possible, the cause of the afflictions now appointed; to take the chastisement patiently, and withal to thank God of His visitation; and if any thing had in time past been amiss, either in pride or lavish expenses, or in any other thing that had offended God, to amend it, and pray Him of His grace and help." Restitution also to those whom he might have oppressed, and charity and kindness to the poor, she presses upon him, as duties befitting those under affliction. The next following communication bore on its superscription, the announcement, "*Caister yielded.*" Unwelcome as were the tidings this letter conveyed, the task was assuredly no less unwelcome to the young soldier to impart them: at the same time, the manly language in which it is couched, and the cheerful spirit it breathes, agree well with the character of the scion of such a family, one who had just, from brotherly affection, been endangering life and limb, and who, after a gallant defence, had only surrendered from stern necessity. The letter runs thus—"Right Worshipful Sir, I recommend me unto you; and as for the certainty of the deliverance of Caister, John Chapman can tell you how we were thereto, as well as myself. As for John Chapman and his three fellows,* I have purveyed that they be paid, each of them, forty shillings, with the money that they had of you and Dawbeney; and that is enough for the season that they have done you service. I pray

* These are the same four soldiers whom Sir John Paston had warmly recommended to his mother, see p. 99, *supra*.

you, give them their thank; for, by my troth, they have as well deserved it as any men that ever bore life; but, as for money, ye need not to give them without ye will; for they be pleased with their wages. Writill promised me to send you the certainty of the appointment [surrender]: we were sore lack of victuals and gunpowder: men's hearts, lack of surety of rescue, were driven thereto to take appointment. If ye will that I come to you, send me word; and I shall purvey me to tarry with you a two or three days. By my troth, the rewarding of such folks as hath been with me during the siege, hath put me in great danger for the money. God preserve you; and I pray you be of good cheer till I speak with you; and I trust to ease your heart in some things."

Thus, then, the Castle was given over to the Duke of Norfolk. Of the terms granted to the garrison, or of the precise day they surrendered, or the place they sought as a retreat, nothing now is known. Perhaps, from the silence observed on the subject, it may be inferred, that they really sustained no greater loss of life than that originally mentioned by Mrs. Paston: and that, on the part of their opponents likewise, two only perished. It seems a remarkable circumstance, and one which proves the animosity entertained by the duke, that the death of these two men—death in very deed caused by himself—was made a charge of wilful murder. No efforts appear to have been spared to bring the Pastons and their retainers to punishment for the imputed crime: the widows of the deceased soldiers were, in the first place, summoned to London, there to undergo an examination; and at the assizes held at Norwich the following summer, the alleged criminals were dragged before the

court, to abide the issue of a regular trial. The following is the account of the proceedings given by the younger of the brothers, in a letter to the elder:—"Right Worshipful Sir, and my special good Brother,"—it is worthy of remark, what deference and respect, men naturally equal then paid to seniority and higher rank—"I recommend me unto you; and it is so, that on Wednesday last past, ye and I, Pamping and Edmund Broom, were indicted of felony at the sessions here at Norwich, for shooting off a gun at Caister, which gun slew two men.—Notwithstanding, Townshend* and Lomner† hold an opinion that the verdict is void; for there were two of the inquest that would not agree to the indictment." * * "I pray you, let not this matter be stopt; for I can think that my Lord of Norfolk's counsel will cause the widows to take an appeal, and to remove it up into the King's Bench, at the beginning of this term."—So far from groundless was the apprehension here expressed, that it afterwards appeared an hundred shillings had been paid to each of the widows to induce them to continue the prosecution. The law, however, was tedious, the trouble considerable, and the bribe scanty; so that the matter, most probably, dropped. At least, nothing farther is heard of it, save that, one of the ladies, wearied with

* It appears probable that the person here mentioned was Roger Townshend of Lincoln's-Inn, afterwards appointed by Richard the third one of the Judges of the Common Pleas, in which important office he was continued by Henry the seventh, and afterwards knighted. His second son, John, was ancestor of the Marquis Townshend, of Rainham, in Norfolk.

† Lomner was a relation of the Pastons; and his family were situated at Mannington, in Norfolk.

delays, declared "that she would no more of that business, and that it was full sore against her will that it ever went so far forth; for it was sued to her great labour and loss."—This most welcome news was conveyed to Sir John by a correspondent, who signs himself R. L., and who, to his satisfactory statement of the unlitigious disposition of the complainant, adds, perhaps with an inclination to a smile:—"and so she hath taken to herself another husband."

Now, therefore, the brothers stood relieved from the threatened inflictions of the law; but conscience, it seems, awoke, when justice had sunk into slumber. John Paston acquaints his brother with his intention to go to Canterbury on foot, there, at the shrine of the murdered St. Thomas, to disburthen himself of the sin of murder; feeling, doubtless, that, inasmuch as it was not to be denied that the deceased had met their fate from the weapons of his party, he had himself, however righteous his cause, been to a certain degree instrumental to their death.

Caister Castle, once won, was a prize apparently easy to be retained. The same circumstance,—its strength of walls and towers—which had enabled it, with less than thirty defenders, to sustain for several weeks the attack of three thousand men, and had rendered the acquisition of it so difficult, equally secured it to its new lord. Nevertheless, towards this fair prize, though, apparently, for ever wrested from his grasp, its late defender could not but turn many a wistful glance. His thoughts ran ever and anon upon the smiling lands and goodly mansion; and he failed not to maintain a careful watch upon all that was passing there. Thus, about four months after the surrender, he tells his

brother that he had noticed that "the bridges were ever kept drawn, and that only three men had been left within the walls to defend the place." The idea, however, of attempting to recover it, never appears to have entered his mind.

The same seems to have been precisely the case with Sir John. He had evidently no chance of regaining his inheritance by force; and this he felt and knew. Hope, notwithstanding, did not forsake him: she lingered at the bottom of the casket; for, in the words of the poet,—

> "Hope, like the glimmering taper's light,
> "Adorns and cheers the way;
> "And still, as darker grows the night,
> "Emits a brighter ray."

He therefore entreats his younger brother—"ever, I pray you, have an eye to Caister, to know the rule there, and send me word whether my wise Lord and Lady be yet as sotted upon it as they were, and whether my lord resorteth thither as often as he did; and of the disposition of the country." This letter was written in 1470. Another of the following year, while it intimates that affairs stood in nearly the same condition, as well regarding Caister as the mind of the writer, contains, among other matter, the following, that can scarcely fail to surprise:—"Item, I would weet whether you have spoken with my Lady of Norfolk, and of her disposition, and her household's, to me and to you wards; and whether it be a possible thing to have Caister again, and their good wills, or not. And also, I pray you understand what fellowship and guiding is in Caister; and have a spy resorting in and out; so ye may know the secrets among them."

The reader, it is apprehended, can in no wise have been prepared for the two points here made manifest,—that the Duchess of Norfolk still retained a secret leaning towards the Pastons; and that the latter, despite the wrongs they had sustained from her consort,—wrongs in goods, in persons, and, considering the accusation of murder, such as attacked their fair name, and even their life,—still maintained a communication with the family of their foe. It is possible, that in those lawless times, when—

> " 'Twixt peace and war such sudden change
> " Was nought unfrequent, nor held strange,"

charges and aggressions of this nature were looked upon as every-day occurrences, and little heeded; however, in these happier days, the very hairs of the head would stand erect, at the bare mention of an armed force seizing a man's house and lands, and turning the owner adrift.

There was, moreover, another cause that might have contributed to this effect—though with most men it would have produced a diametrically opposite one—the connexion between the two parties. The father of the Pastons had been of the duke's council; and the second son himself had, according to the custom that then prevailed, been brought up in his household. He had even been habited in his livery; by which it must not be supposed that he bore a badge of humiliation; for such a garb, in the fifteenth century, was scarcely even one of dependence. It was, at the utmost, only a designation of that honorary dependence, that kind of playing at servitude, which made the esquire feel proud to stoop to hold the stirrup of his lord, or to step forth to fill his goblet at a banquet. Little more was expected, than that, as

often as his Grace resorted in state to the palace* of his ancestors, in the metropolis of his duchy, the Pastons should attend in his suite. On such occasions, they thought it no scorn to appear in their gowns of tawney and blue, each bringing behind him twenty serving-men, arrayed in the like hues; thus assisting to swell the duke's train, and evidently enrolling themselves among his adherents.

The duchess, a Talbot by birth, daughter of the first Earl of Shrewsbury, was one of those happily-gifted individuals, who, by their courteous affability win, and by their kindness retain, a firm hold of the affections of

* Some remains of the palace of the Dukes of Norfolk existed in Norwich until within the last few years. All traces of architectural grandeur had indeed long ago disappeared; but the spot where this noble building stood was marked by large quantities of decayed masonry, and heaps of rubbish covering a wide unsightly space. Camden tells of a theatre, a bowling-green, and a tennis-court, which the palace-walls, in his time, enclosed; and such a description agrees well with Kirkpatrick's careful representation of the building as it stood in 1710,—a splendid edifice, encompassing a court, and displaying all the luxuriance of the semi-Gothic taste, which prevailed in the seventeenth century. According to Blomefield, the building Kirkpatrick drew was the second palace erected by the Dukes of Norfolk, on that same spot. A view of it, in its dilapidated condition, is given by Bell, in his *Antiquities of Norfolk*. The high-pitched roof, with its double tier of lucarnes, was then in a ruined state; and the mullioned windows had lost their tracery, and were empty or filled-in with brick. Amid such decay, however, the traces of by-gone greatness were well to be perceived. The bridge, adjoining the palace, still retains the appellation of "the Duke's-Palace Bridge;" and so current is the name of the building in the minds of the inhabitants of Norwich, that not more than three or four years ago, a member of the family of the bishop, a stranger, desiring, on his arrival in the city, to be driven to *the Palace*, was filled with astonishment at finding himself set down in a foul and deserted spot, instead of alighting at the garden gate of the episcopal residence, with its habitable rooms and bright fireside welcome.

those around them. It will be remembered, that the duke, in his manifesto previously to attacking the Castle, expressly spoke of her intercession in favor of the Pastons. They had probably ascertained that those feelings were not extinct; and they therefore turned towards her with a wistful eye. They likewise looked with confidence to the Earl of Oxford, whose influence and power had received a great accession by recent events. He had always been their friend; and at the time of the siege of the castle, had even promised to come up to their rescue. But the Yorkists were then all-powerful; and he was unable to carry his promise into effect. Now, in the revival of the Lancastrian party, he also had regained his influence, and in the brief ascendancy of the Red Rose, had been promoted to the highest offices of the state. To him, therefore, as to a rising sun, even the Duke of Norfolk deemed it expedient to pay court; and thus the hopes of the Pastons again revived. In high spirits, Sir John writes to his mother—"I trust I shall yet do well in all that concerns these matters; for my Lady of Norfolk hath promised to be ruled by my Lord of Oxford, in all things that belong to my brother and me. The duke and duchess sue to him as humbly as ever I did to them; insomuch, that my Lord of Oxford shall have the rule of them and theirs; and, by my troth, he is better lord to me than I can think, in many matters."

It was not, however, upon assistance from others, that the ejected family altogether relied. They appear to have felt themselves called upon, in the language of the fabulist, "to apply their own shoulders to the wheel," and try what might be effected, as well by annoyance in its various forms, as by more gentle methods. They flattered themselves, some one or other of these would

lead to the accomplishment of their great end—the regaining possession of their castle. The duke might become disgusted with a tenure accompanied with vexation and trouble, and in his disgust might relinquish it; or he might possibly even be induced to cede it with apparent good grace. To their efforts, therefore, they allowed no remission; and John Paston, who was upon the spot, was, as might be expected, the principal actor. In pursuance of his object, he is found repeatedly presenting himself at the manor-courts, protesting against their authority, interrupting their proceedings, and endeavouring to break up the sessions. On one occasion,—it must have been a strange state of things,—he took his seat without scruple by the side of the clerk, and, calling upon those present to record and bear witness to his protest, deliberately swept off the wet ink from line to line with his finger, and effaced the entries.* No wonder, then,—if matters of this daring nature could be hazarded with impunity,—that his Grace should be tempted to acknowledge that "little had been the good or worship he had derived from the estate;" or that Sir John should be assured by one of his correspondents, "my lord and lady say they be weary of Caister, and all the household also." Weary, however, though they might be, there were no signs of a disposition on their part to relinquish what had been but recently acquired with much labor and cost; and, accordingly, changing his tone,—for the versatility of the human mind is never equally sure to make itself apparent as under the pressure of adversity,—the late valiant defender of the castle, and subsequent insolent brow-beater of the ducal

* *Paston Letters*, IV., p. 423.

authority, did not think it unbecoming his station to address the following humble petition:—"Meekly beseecheth your poor and true continual servant, John Paston the younger, that it would please your good Grace to call unto your most discreet and notable remembrance, that lateward, my brother, John Paston, knight, being enfeoffed in the manour of Caister, late John Fastolfe's, knight, in the county of Norfolk, and peaceably possessed thereof, certain persons, servants unto your good Grace, entered into the said manour, and thereof have taken the issues and profits in the name of your said Highness, to the great hurt of my said brother, and me, your said servant and orator. Wherefore, as I have oft times before this, I beseech your good Grace, at the reverence of God and in the way of charity, that my said brother may, by your said Highness, again be restored unto the possession of the said manour, according to the law and good conscience; and we shall pray God for the preservation of your most noble estate."*

But the language of supplication equally failed; so that no resource seemed to be left but in gold, the "ratio ultima," if not with kings, yet certainly in most cases with subjects, as here with John Paston. Money, as Horace said of old, can lull the vigilance of sentinels, and force its way through barriers of stone: now therefore, all other expedients having been tried, it was obviously indispensible to have recourse to this; howbeit, as already has appeared, the Pastons were sorely ill provided. Accordingly, one morning, the young soldier repaired to Framlingham, and, after an interview with the duchess, proceeded, at her suggestion,

* *Paston Letters*, v., p. 45.

purse in hand, to submit his case to the council-board. The fact and the result he communicates in these words to his brother:—"I went to the council, and offered before them your service to my lord, and, for the having again your place and lands in Caister, forty pounds; not speaking of stuff, or of any thing else contained in it. They answered me—'your offer was more than reasonable; and, if the matter were theirs, they wist what conscience would drive them to.' They said they would move my lord with it; and so they did. But then, such a tempest arose, and he gave them such an answer, that not one of them all would tell it me."

Rebuffed he was, but not dismayed; for the same cheerful spirit which had supported him in the hour of danger, sprang up with renewed elasticity in this fresh disappointment. In continuance, therefore, he advises the knight to make fresh trial of the influence he possessed with the duchess, and recommends him to back his entreaties by the offer of a bribe, which, unavailing as it had been in the former instance, might possibly with the weaker sex have better success. "Proffer my lady somewhat, and I can think it shall yet be taken: my lady must have somewhat to buy her a coverchief, as well as my lord." Cunning too, and not unskilled in human nature, he subjoins, "Mistress Jane Roden,"—she was the duchess's favorite waiting-woman,—"doth all with her lady, and hath promised her good-will in future to be a special labourer in your matters. You must not, therefore, forget to procure some goodly ring, at the price of twenty shillings, or some pretty flower of the same price, and not under, to give to Mistress Jane." In the sequel of the same letter, turning more immediately to himself, he entreats

his brother to defray the cost of a supper he had given at Framlingham to the members of the Duke of Norfolk's council, and the expenses incurred in his journies and residence there;—the charge of the former was two shillings and threepence; and that of the latter, including lodging for a week, nine shillings and three halfpence, in addition:—and he concludes with the following remarkable petition,—"I ask no more good of you for all the service that I shall do you while the world standeth, but a goss-hawk,* if any of my Lord Chamberlain's men or your's go to Calais, or if any be to get in London; that is, a mewed hawk; for she may make you sport, when ye come into England a dozen years hence; * * * and if any folk of worship and of my acquaintance be in your company, I shall so purvey for them and you, and ever ye come to Norwich and they with you,"—it is from Norwich this letter is dated—"that they shall have as dainty victuals and as great plenty thereof for one penny, as they shall have of the Treasurer of Calais for fifteen pence; and ye, peradventure, a pye of Wymondham to boot. Now think of me, good lord; for, if I have not an hawk, I shall wax fat for default of labor, and dead for default of company, by my troth. No more: but I pray God send you all your desires, and me my mewed goss-hawk in

* Latham, in his book on Falconry, says—"that a *goshawk* is the first and most-esteemed kind of hawk; and that a *sore hawk* is from the first taking of her from the airy, till she has mewed her feathers." Sir John Fenn, from whom this note is borrowed, adds—"by the anxiety here expressed for an hawk, we may judge of the attention then paid to the diversion of hawking; and, by the difference in the price of provisions at Calais and at Norwich, of the expensiveness of the attendance upon the wars in France, and in our garrisons there."

haste; or, rather than fail, a soar hawk. There is a grosser, dwelling over against the Well with two buckets, a little from Saint Helen's, hath ever hawks to sell."*

It were tedious to enumerate how, as time went by, hope and disappointment alternately prevailed. That the former was, after all, in existence, is made evident by such passages as the following, in the letters that were interchanged between Mrs. Paston and her sons:—"Item, for the getting again of Caister, I trust to have good news thereof hastily;" and "Item, I hope Caister may yet be had by the end of this term." They hoped against hope; and they strove against apparent impossibility. It fortuned that, at last, after the estate had already lain six years in the possession of the Duke of Norfolk, the king himself was induced personally to address that nobleman upon the subject. He began cautiously, by inquiring of him how he meant to deal with Caister; a question, to which, "my lord,"—John Paston himself vouches for the story—"answered never a word." However uncourtly this demeanor to a sovereign, his majesty shewed no displeasure: he only turned to Sir William Brandon, who was near, and requested of him the information he had sought in vain from the duke. The application was directed to one who was well acquainted with his Grace's mind; but, considering what that mind was, he was not over-forward to disclose it. Hesitating, therefore, he rendered a brief and ambiguous reply, till, being further pressed, he found all subterfuge vain, and was forced to confess that "my lord's determination had been, the king should as soon have his life as that place." Twice over were these words repeated; not, assuredly, because they were

* *Paston Letters*, II., p. 109.

welcome, but because the monarch could scarcely prevail on himself to believe them on the first communication. So, addressing himself again to the Duke, he called upon him to confirm or deny them: "whereon, my lord plainly answered 'yea.'" The sequel seems rather surprising:—"Edward added never one word more, but turned his back and went his way."*

After failures so repeated, relief at length arose from a quarter whence it could least of all have been expected. It was in the autumn of 1475, that the conversation, just related, took place between the king and his haughty noble. In the first month of the succeeding year,—warned by no previous symptoms of illness, and at little more than thirty years of age,—the Duke of Norfolk died most suddenly, at his castle of Framlingham. One little daughter, an only child, remained, the heiress of all his wealth: but she was not,—could not be,—the heiress of his power: that iron hand which held it, was relaxed in death; and the power escaped from its grasp,—irrecoverably.†

Time has been exquisitely called "the beautifier of the dead;" yet can he not claim this property exclusively for his own. Death of itself has a magic power to add beauty and loveliness to those who are gone for ever

* *Paston Letters*, II., p. 185.

† So richly endowed an heiress could not long want for suitors: her hand was early and eagerly sought; but on the part of none of them with offers of equal splendour, as of Richard, Duke of York, king Edward's second son. To him, therefore, her mother betrothed her; but heavy clouds soon gathered over their dawning fortunes: her promised bridegroom, at nine years of age, was murdered by his uncle, in the Tower; and the youthful duchess herself, though she survived him a few years, died unmarried, leaving her money and her lands to pass into the hands of strangers.

from our view. If the living energy be quenched, and the upward glance brought down, yet still, under the same taming influence, the dark shades of the character pass from remembrance, and evil feelings are laid to sleep; and whilst a man gazes on the peaceful features, the inactive hand, the quiet form extended before him, he can scarcely endure to say, "this was my enemy." Such appear to have been the feelings which reigned in Sir John Paston's mind, when he saw his once powerful oppressor a lifeless corpse. See him, he most probably did; for he was at Framlingham at the time he died. Perhaps he had gone thither to urge his suit afresh; and perhaps (to judge from the opening sentence of a letter which he addressed upon the occasion to his mother) his hopes that that suit might be successful had again revived in full force. "Like it you to wit," he writes, "that not in the most happy season for me, it is so fortuned, that my Lord of Norfolk, yesterday being in good health, this night died about midnight. Wherefore, it is for all that loved him to do and help now that which may be to his honour and weal of his soul. And it is so, that this country is not well purveyed of cloth of gold for the covering of his body and herse; wherefore, every man helping to his power, I put the council of my lord in comfort, that I hoped to get one for that day; if it were so, that it be not broken or put to other use. Wherefore, please it you to send me word, if ye can have, or can come by, the cloth of tissue that I bought for our father's tomb; and I undertake it shall be saved again for you unhurt, at my peril. I deem hereby to get great thanks and great assistance in time to come."*

* *Paston Letters*, II., p. 187.

This was on the seventeenth of January; and in less than a fortnight, Sir John had not only claimed the possession of his castle, but had entered on it, none letting or hindering, and had tarried three days within its walls. So prompt a measure, he informs his brother, had been adopted at the advice of Sir Robert Wingfield; and however some "who meant unkindly by him," might have whispered that his haste was indecent, and his conduct toward the widowed duchess ungrateful, yet, he himself is certain, that "there can be no discreet person who so thinketh." Indeed, "could he have known of the duke's approaching death four hours before it took place, he would not have suffered the breath to escape from the body, before he had presented himself at the gate of the castle at Caister." More flattering still is the unction which he endeavoured to apply to his conscience, by persuading himself that the prompt reversion to their owner of lands and goods unjustly detained, could not fail powerfully to conduce to the weal of the departed spirit. With conduct consonant to these expressions, whatever may have been the inward feelings of his heart, he carefully adopted the outward garb of woe; and, because in the neighborhood of Framlingham he could not furnish himself with suitable attire, he wrote to his brother to procure it for him; desiring him to send "his long russet gown of the French russet in all haste possible, and with it his gown of puke, furred with white lamb."*

* Archdeacon Nares, in his *Glossary*, makes *puke*, or *pewke*, synonymous for deep grey, or any dark color. He derives it from the Latin word *pullus*, and defines it as a hue between russet and black. Drent, also, in his *Translation of Horace*, Sat. VIII., renders,—"Nigra succinctam vadere palla," by "ytuckde in *pukish* frocke."—To go a little farther,

Having thus promptly instituted measures for the recovery of his long-alienated birthright, Sir John hurried back to Calais, to resume the service required by his office. He thence wrote home to his faithful brother, desiring him to ascertain how far the royal sanction could be obtained to the seizure he had made, and whether he might indeed expect to be permitted to hold possession. Whatever the answer he received, it is evident he did not allow the matter to slumber; for, in the month of May following, he was again in England, and, in person, laid his claims before the king. Edward was a monarch who loved his pleasures; and without money, these are no more to be procured by a sovereign than a subject. Here, therefore, a disputed title to a desired estate offered a plea for levying fines; and altogether the opportunity was fair, and one not to be by any means neglected. The knight's own letter, addressed to his mother on the occasion, best shows how his prospects brightened:—"Please it you to weet," he says, "that, as for my matters, they do, blessed be God, as well as I would they did; save that it shall cost me great money, and hath cost me much labour. It is so, that the king must have one hundred marks; and other costs will draw forty marks. And my matter is examined by the King's Council, and declared afore all the Lords, and now lacketh nothing but the Privy Seals; for the king hath promised me as I would he should fulfil; and all the Lords, Judges, and Serjeants, have affirmed my

Sir John Fenn, in his note upon this passage, (*Paston Letters*, II., p. 194) says, "*puck* or *puke* is an old Gothic word, signifying the devil. Hence puke became synonymous to black or dark grey, and consequently might be used for mourning. On Good-Friday, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen always wore their *pewke gowns*."

title good. I have much pain to get so much money. * * * The king would have bought Caister; but he was informed, both that it was not meet for a prince, and also of the great price that I would sell it at; for that he should have had to pay two thousand marks, or more, if he had had it."

These circumstances, as already stated, took place in the month of May, 1476; and, after an interval of only four weeks, the whole was concluded. A messenger, dispatched in breathless haste, to the George in St. Paul's Wharf, where John Paston was then residing, brought him the happy tidings—"Item, blessed be God, I have Caister at my will. God hold it better than it has been done heretofore!"

Thus, then, the struggle, so long and painfully maintained, was finally laid to rest. Caister ceased to be debateable land; and its owner's fondest hopes were realized. Yet, alas! even when the fondest hopes *are* realized and the most eagerly desired object *is* obtained, the happy anticipated results by no means always follow: a void may still exist in the mind, and

> "A cruel something unpossess'd
> "Corrode and leaven all the rest;"

or consequences of a still darker character may ensue. Even so fared it with the knight. That he did really take possession of his estate and mansion, is evident; for there are letters addressed to him, with the words "Caister-Hall" upon their envelope. But long anxiety had already undermined his health: he had, in his early years, been familiar with sorrow and care: in his youth he had seen his father accused, imprisoned, and weighed down to an untimely grave; and he had, in his more advanced life, encountered

enmity and suffered trial; and, born to wealth and rank, had never known freedom from embarrassment, and debt, and persecution. Perhaps, also, his career, however gay and courtly, had been destitute of that repose, which alone ensures comfort on the retrospect; and now, though warfare and litigation, suits and petitions, were at an end, they had not been succeeded by the "pleasures of memory;" the only pleasures, as the poet justly expresses it, "a man can call his own." He had gone to London, in the November of 1479, regardless of the warnings of his brother, who had earnestly entreated him to beware of the great sickness at that time prevalent in both city and country, but raging in the former with peculiar violence. Its effects at Norwich, where he himself then abode, he described, by saying, "the people dieth sore; and specially about my house. My wife and children come not out; but flee further we cannot; for at Swainsthorp,* since my departing thence, they have died and been sick, nearly in every house in the town." This disease, then so alarming, appears to have been a continuation of that, which had broken out two years previously with tremendous fury. At that time, to use the words of Hollinshed, "by reason of great heat and distemperance of aire, happened so fierce and quicke a pestilence, that fiftéene yeares warre past consumed not the third part of the people, that onelie

* The manor of Swainsthorp continued for some generations in the hands of the Paston family. Mrs. Paston, when writing to her husband, John Paston, Esq., in 1450, reminds him that he must, as Lord of Swainsthorp manor, "find an armed man, in time of war, to serve in the castle of Norwich, for forty days, at his own cost, and pay to the king thirty shillings yearly out of the said manour." She likewise puts him in mind, that his father died seised of the said manor, and that he entered upon it as heir, after his father's decease.—*Paston Letters*, III., p. 85.

foure moneths miserablie and pitifullie dispatched and brought to their graues. So that, if the number had béene kept by multiplieng of vnities, and out of them to haue raised a complet number, it would haue mooved matter of verie great admiration. But it should séeme that they were infinit, if consideration be had of the comparison, inferred for the more effectuall setting foorth of that cruell and ceaselesse contagion. And suerlie it soundeth to reason, that the pestilence should fetch awaie so manie thousands, as in iudgement by proportion of fiftéene yeares warre one maie gather; and manie more too. For eüerie man knoweth that in warres, time, place, persons, and meanes are limited: time of warre begun and ended; place circumscribed; persons embattelled, and weapons also whereby the fight is tried: so that all these haue their limitations, beyond which they haue no extent. But the pestilence, being a generall infection of the aire, an element ordeined to maintaine life, though it haue a limitation in respect of the totall compasse of the world, yet whole climats may be poisoned; and it were not absurd to saie, that all and euerie part of the aire maie be pestilentlie corrupted; and so consequentlie not limited: wherefore full well it maie be said of the pestilence (procuring so great a depopulation) as one saith of surfetting:

'Ense cadunt multi, perimit sed crapula plures.'"

And, in 1479, now again, it appears by the same chronicler, there "was great mortalitie and death by the pestilence, not onelie in London, but in diuerse parts of the realme, which began in the latter end of September in the yeare last before passed, and continued all this yeare till the beginning of Nouember, which was about

fourtéene moneths: in the which space died innumerable of people in the said citie and else-where."

Anxiety and timidity are well known to prepare an easy way for the entrance of contagion; and from the influence of neither of these was Sir John free. Though established in his possessions, he does not seem to have been altogether quiet in the enjoyment of them; and he still suffered from the long-standing embarrassment of his affairs. Upon the latter subject, which has been so often mentioned before, it may appear needless again to touch; but still, as the narrative is arrived at the very last letter from the hand of the knight, it is hoped an extract to that effect may not be inadmissible in this place. The point was of the highest interest to the writer, nor less so to his mother, whom he addresses: the statement is characteristic of the parties and times.—"Please it you to weet, that I have been here at London a fortnight, whereof the first four days I was in much fear of the sickness, and also found my chamber and stuff not so clean as I deemed, which troubled me sore. And, as I told you at my departing, I was not well monied; for I had not past ten marks, whereof I departed forty shillings to be delivered of my old bed-fellow; and then I rode beyond Dunstable, and there spake with one of my witnesses, which promised me to take labour, and to get me writings touching this matter between me and the Duke of Suffolk, and I rewarded him twenty shillings; and then, as I informed you, I paid five marks incontinent upon my coming here, to repledge out my gown of velvet and other geer; and then I hoped to have borrowed some of Townshend, who has fooded*

* "Qu. *footed*, i. e. set foot out of his own home; or *fooded*, i. e. eat out of his own house, for fear of the sickness."—*Sir John Fenn.*

not forth ever since; and in effect, I could have at the most and at the soonest yesterday, twenty shillings. Wherefore, I beseech you to purvey me an hundred shillings; and also to write to Peacock, that he purvey me as much, which I suppose that he hath gathered at Paston and other places by this time; for, without I have this ten pounds, as God help me, I shall do but little good in no matter; nor yet wot I how to come home, but I have it.—This geer hath troubled me so, that it hath made me more than half sick, as God help me."*

Thus closed the chequered life of Sir John Paston, before he had reached forty years. He died, like his father—a stranger, at an inn, and alone,—without a relative or friend by his bedside. His brother hastened to London, to "the George on St. Paul's Wharf," but all too late to enjoy the poor satisfaction of ever again beholding him—even as a corpse. The dread of contagion had caused the body to be hurried to the earth; and, the only consideration being at such a time to expedite matters of this nature as much as possible, the White-Friars' Monastery had, from its vicinity, been chosen as the spot for interment. Without delay, he wrote to his mother, acquainting her with this painful circumstance. "Right Worshipful Mother," he says, "after all duties of humble recommendation, as lowly as I can, I beseech you of your daily blessing and prayers. And, Mother, John Clement, bearer hereof, can tell you, (the more the pity it is) it hath pleased God that my brother is buried in the convent of the White-Friars in London; which I thought should not have been; for I supposed he should have been buried at Broomholm. And that

* *Paston Letters*, II., p. 277.

caused me so soon to ride to London, to have purveyed his bringing home; and if it had been his will to have lain at Broomholm, I had purposed, all the way I had ridden, to have brought home my Grandam* and him together; but that purpose is void now." "Agitation and employment," he adds, "will not allow his empty head to remember much else that he wished to write of;" but still, with provident forethought, he requests that immediate entry may be made in his name into all the manors lately belonging to his brother; and that the tenants should be charged to pay no rent to any emissary from the Duchess of Norfolk, or from his uncle, William Paston, who lately had endeavoured to contest his brother's right to the estate, and had threatened to become a harassing antagonist.

John Paston would not turn his back on London, until he had provided that a suitable monument should be erected over his brother's grave; and the care he devoted to procuring a faithful portrait, as well as a skilfully-executed effigy of the deceased, may assist in appreciating the fidelity of the monumental representations of former days. He entreats a correspondent, whose name is not preserved, to "remember his brother's stone;" that it be executed before he next should visit London; and to take especial care that the effigy "be cleanly wrought." He subjoins,—"furthermore, it is told me, that the man of St. Bride's is no cleanly pourtrayer; therefore I would that it might be pourtrayed by some other man, and he to grave it up." It appears by this, that it was customary that two artists should be employed

* The lady here mentioned, was Agnes, daughter of Sir Edmund Berry, Knight, and widow of Sir William Paston, "the Good Judge:" she died in 1479.

upon such works;—the one to make the drawing; the other to commit the same to marble, stone, or brass. It seems likewise probable that, where it was known a likeness existed of the deceased, pains were taken to obtain a copy of it; so that the monumental effigy may be regarded as a faithful delineation, not only as respects dress, armour, or badges, but also as to the features, stature, and general air of the individual.

John Paston, the younger, was now become the owner of the castle, whose walls he had ten years before defended with gallantry. In spite of the molestation threatened by his uncle, but little actual annoyance seems to have been offered from that quarter; neither did he experience any, nor was it to be apprehended, from the widowed Duchess of Norfolk and her young and only daughter. In quiet, therefore, he settled himself on his estate; and there he long resided, respected in the characters of a country gentleman and landlord, as well as beloved in those of a husband and a father. Allusion has already been made to his wife and children;* and it is now the place to state more distinctly that he had for above three years been married to Margery, daughter of Sir Thomas Brews, of Stinton Hall, in Norfolk. The lady appears to have been in all respects worthy of his preference; not only when viewed through the partial eyes of love, but even considered in the unbiassed estimate of the calmer judgment of a brother; for Sir John, in writing of her, had descanted with admiration on "her person, her youth, the stock she is come of, and the tender favor she is in with her father and mother;" not omitting "their own virtuous disposition, which prognosticateth that, of likelihood,

* See p. 127, *supra*.

the maid likewise should be virtuous and good."—To crown the whole, he pronounced Mistress Margery "a witty gentlewoman, and modest and maidenly withal;" and what could John Paston desire beyond? But true love's course did not run smooth in the year fourteen hundred and eighty, any more than it does in the nineteenth century; and difficulties, that appear to have originated with the lady's father, were so pertinaciously urged, that, under a protracted opposition, the firmness of the lover was found to falter, and he himself raised the self-same objections which he had in the first instance been called upon to encounter. So engaging are some of the letters which, during this suspense, the lady addressed to her hesitating suitor, that, though they may be thought rather to interrupt than forward the thread of the story, it were hard to refrain from one or two quotations. When suffering under an apprehension that the existing obstacles would never be made to give way, and that the £133. 6*s*. 8*d*., which was all the dowry she could bring, would not be found adequate to his expectations, she, in the following touching terms, entreats her lover to forego an intended visit. "I fear that my poor hundred pounds and fifty marks are right far from the accomplishment of your desires. Wherefore, if ye would be content with that good, and my poor person, I would be the merriest maiden on ground; but, if ye think not yourself so satisfied, or that ye might have much more good, (as I have understood by you before,) good, true, and loving valentine, take no such labour upon you as to come here for this matter. But let what has been, pass, and never more to be spoken of, as I may be your true lover and bead-woman during my life." Poor lady! she had

previously written to him,—"if that ye love me, as I trust verily ye do, ye will not leave me for my lack of means;" but this was a deduction drawn from her own more devoted affection; for she immediately subjoins,—"if that *ye* had but half the livelihood that ye have, I would not forsake you." How difficulties, which for a time seemed insuperable, were at length overcome, is a point, like many others in the tales of by-gone days, not now to be ascertained; but, probably, the arguments adduced by Thomas Kela, who seems to have been John Paston's confidential adviser, brought conviction to his mind and prevailed. A letter from him is preserved, wherein this cautious friend, in an amusingly business-like strain, enumerates, in tempting detail, the contingent advantages the connection would offer—not forgetting the furniture of the lady's chamber, and her own well-stocked and handsome wardrobe, which would amount to a hundred marks beyond the hard cash of her portion;—and he even lets drop a hint, that he had heard Lady Brews propose to provide them lodgings and board at Stinton, during the first three years after their marriage, in case a boon of this nature should be found necessary to bring about their union.

However this may have been, the decease of his elder brother removed the successor to Caister beyond the need of such assistance. The castle was from that time his habitual and, apparently, peaceful residence; for the civil discords, which shook the kingdom to its centre during the tempestuous reign of Richard the Third, were felt but faintly and from afar on the remote sea-coast of Norfolk. Yet did not John Paston resign himself to inglorious ease: on the contrary, as often as the trumpet sounded to arms, he was at his post

in defence of the royal cause; and at the battle of Stoke by Newark, where the Earl of Lincoln, the Lord Lovel, and other partisans of Lambert Simnel endured a signal defeat, the honor of knighthood and banneretcy was conferred upon him on the field. This happened in the year 1487: in 1488 he was again summoned to appear, with twenty armed men and steeds, to render assistance to the Earl of Oxford in subduing the Yorkshire rebels; and, seven years subsequently, the Corporation of Yarmouth cast themselves upon him for aid against the apprehended invasion of Perkin Warbeck. Indeed, the vicinity of Caister to that borough made its inhabitants regard Sir John as at all times their patron and powerful guardian. His advice was entreated by them as often as they proposed to "apparel and furnish their town:" they besought him to "come and sport himself among them:" they would not extend their ramparts, or raise or fortify their walls, without seeking that "his mastership might be well pleased;" and they feasted him on porpoise, in those days regarded as a dainty of the highest order.—Was it possible for a Corporation to express themselves in language of more unequivocal import?

To these, which may be regarded as distinctions dependent upon martial exploits or military power, were added others of a more peaceful character. He was for many years the representative of Norwich in Parliament; and he held the office of High Sheriff of the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. It also appears, from incidental allusions in the course of the *Paston Correspondence*, that he was one of the Esquires of the body to Henry the seventh; and that he was entrusted with the post of Vice-Admiral, under the Earl of Oxford, and was enrolled among the knights selected to receive the

Princess Katharine, on her landing at Plymouth in 1501. For the latter appointment he was probably indebted to his friend, William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, the sturdy opponent of Wolsey, and steady defender of that unfortunate queen.

Thus, full of honors, the third and last John Paston sank down to the grave, only two years after the last-mentioned mission. His lady had died shortly before him; and their remains found a resting-place together in the church of the White-Friars' Monastery, at Norwich. He was succeeded by his only son, William, at that time twenty-three years of age; who, like him, received the honor of knighthood from his sovereign, and, like him also, held the office of High Sheriff for Norfolk and Suffolk, and fulfilled its duties on more than one occasion. Sir William, following the steps of his ancestor and namesake, "the good Judge," rose to distinction by his skill in the law. His name is likewise found among the gay and courtly suite of Henry the eighth, whom he accompanied on the occasion of the interview between the French and English kings near Calais, where, while he swelled his sovereign's train, he contributed to make the Champ du Drap d'or glitter with gold and jewels. His life, protracted to the unusual term of ninety years, came to its close in 1554; and dying at Paston Hall, the original seat of the family, he was buried in the small parochial church, leaving a numerous progeny by his lady, Bridget, daughter of Sir Henry Heydon, of Baconthorpe. One single letter* from his hand occurs in the collection of the family records—a letter written from Cambridge, whilst he was yet a youth

* *Paston Letters*, v., p. 41.

and a student in that university. In it he, in modest and respectful terms, addresses himself to his father, telling him he had fled from Cambridge to avoid the sweating sickness, then first, in 1486, introduced into England by the army of Henry the seventh; and, in touching language, he describes the mortality occasioned by that fearful disorder.

It is much to be regretted, that here the *Paston Letters* cease, after having shed their light over more than three generations of the family; and a most safe and pleasant light it is whereby to look upon the events of the times. The several writers are individuals for the most part closely connected by the ties of kindred, who unbosom themselves to each other with the fullest confidence and simplicity; not only allowing the man of the nineteenth century to enter into the arcana of a domestic circle of four hundred years previous, but also enabling him, through their medium, to regard, as an actual spectator, the public events of the period they comprehend —a period of very unusual historical interest. The information thus imparted has the rare value of being transmitted through channels peculiarly free from suspicion;—as much so, at least, as is consistent with human nature—and it receives an additional stamp of genuineness from the individuality of character impressed upon it by the different parties. Each one lends his narration the coloring of his own mind; and thus the several personages stand out in distinct reality, and the reader learns to know them as well as if he had actually enjoyed their converse, and had derived his knowledge from their living voice. Much information, also, of an incidental nature, may be gleaned from the full harvest of those volumes: Dame Paston and her sons, their nearest con-

nections, their more distant relatives, and their intimate friends, gossip at ease of their own concerns, as well as of those which might chance to fall under their notice. Whilst speaking of purchases of lands and goods, of visits about to be paid, of love-matters in hand, of the conduct of superiors and dependents, they unintentionally disclose the opinions and feelings, together with the habits and prevalent observances, of individuals of rank and fashion of the day; nor less the current value of articles on sale, and the state of literature, and modes of dress, &c., in the reigns of Henry the fourth and fifth, and of Edward the fourth, and Richard the third, and Henry the seventh. Much then were it to be wished, that materials so copious and so interesting descended to a lower period, and that it were not now necessary abruptly to conclude this narrative with the bare outline, to be collected from Blomefield's *Norfolk History*. Yet, as the race of Caister was nearly run,—its prime and maturity passed, and its decline at hand,—there is the consolation, in hastening on to the conclusion, that materials then most abounded where interest was deepest.

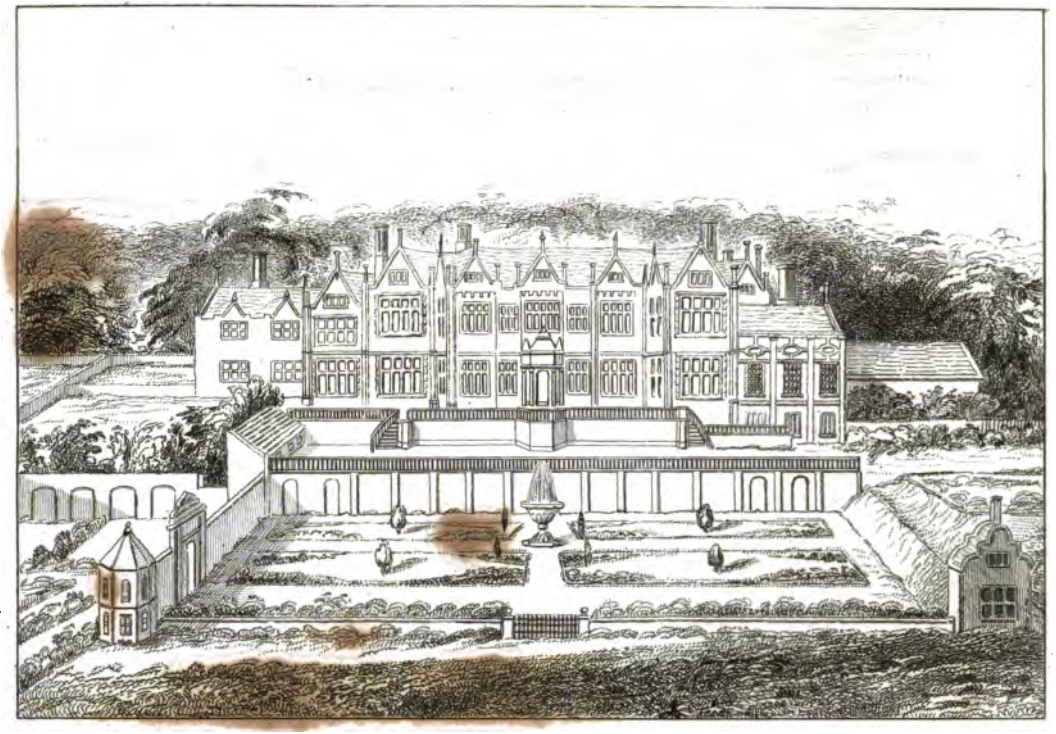
It were a wide field to enter upon, to attempt to trace Sir William Paston's numerous descendants, the issue of the five sons and seven daughters, who at one time gathered around his hearth. It may even be a question how far it is strictly allowable to invite attention to the annexed pedigree; seeing that the story has no further natural connection with the family, than as they were connected with Caister Castle. To this, Clement, the second in order of Sir William's sons, but the eldest then surviving, succeeded on his father's death. Born at Paston-Hall,

, married Sir
nd, of Qui-
rt.

and accustomed from his childhood to the sea, which almost touched its walls, the boy seems early to have been inspired with a desire to embark upon its waves. Accordingly, his name, while yet he was a stripling, is found enrolled in the navy of Henry the eighth, and he was at an early age entrusted with the command of one of the king's vessels. While thus employed, he was successful in an action with the French, in which he took their admiral, the Baron de St. Blancaire, prisoner. Him, as the Duke d' Alençon of old, Caister is said to have been honored by receiving within its walls, and by being made the place of his detention during all the period of his captivity; a captivity finally terminated by the payment of seven thousand crowns, the price of a cup of gold of beautiful workmanship, entwined with serpents, upon which the valiant captain, then knighted, appears peculiarly to have placed his desires. The tide of prosperity, which had now set in upon his course, bore him along on its current, without ebbing and without diminution: under queen Mary's reign, he was appointed to receive the surrender of the rebel, Sir Thomas Wyat; and under that of her sister, was made high sheriff of Norfolk, and entrusted with the command of the fleet ordered to the port of Havre. King Henry the eighth dignified him with the proud title of his *champion:* the protector, Duke of Somerset, styled him his *soldier:* queen Mary, her *seaman;* and queen Elizabeth, her *father.* During the latter part of his protracted life, which was spent peaceably at home, his time was much employed in the erection of a splendid and spacious mansion at Oxnead, upon an estate that had long been in the possession of his family.

The fall of Caister may be dated from the rise of Oxnead. The latter, modern and elegant, presented a front of battlemented gables and latticed windows, which looked out upon terraces and fountains, smooth banks, level turf, and well-trimmed evergreens; whilst the sun that streamed bright upon its lake and fish-pools, tinted the massy trees in the park, and caught upon the speckled groups of deer reclining in their shade. Caister, on the other hand, was antiquated: it was narrow and dark and moated: its walls were high, its tower steep, its windows few and far apart; and, what contributed still more to render it undesirable as a residence, a fire, occasioned by the carelessness of a servant, had lately done the place much injury. The natural consequences ensued: an unwillingness to expend the sum required for repairs, engendered neglect; and neglect was followed by desertion. Upon the death of Sir Clement, without issue, in 1599, his heir, a third Sir William, eldest son of his brother, Erasmus, removed to the newly-built mansion; and Caister Castle, from that time forward in the occupation of menials, was abandoned to its fate.

Henceforth the story must be brief.—It was in the last year of the sixteenth century, that the Pastons altogether quitted Caister as their dwelling place; and, after a further period of just sixty years, Sir William, embarrassed by a sum of £6500, due to William Crow, a citizen of London, ceded the lordly residence of Sir John Fastolfe and his forefathers, with all its lordships and manors, in liquidation of the debt. Separated, the family and the castle had for a time a very different lot. The latter sunk to ruin, while the former



OXNEAD HALL.

increased in dignity: they married into the first houses in the kingdom, and were created baronets in 1641, and Earls of Yarmouth and Barons Paston in 1679. But the wheel of fortune is not so constructed as to stand still; and scarcely had they attained to this, the summit of their prosperity, when they were doomed to a decline more rapid than their rise. The second who bore the title of earl, saw his three sons precede him to the grave; and with him this noble race, in 1732, became extinct in the male line. Their estates, also, had been so heavily encumbered, that it was necessary the whole should be sold; on which occasion the principal portion, including the newly-built mansion, fell into the hands of Lord Anson, the celebrated circumnavigator. His lordship, unfortunately, was not, equally with the Pastons, disposed to adopt Oxnead as his residence; and it consequently perished through its own magnificence. To have preserved it as it was, would have involved a heavy and useless expence: to have suffered it to fall by decay, would have caused an idle waste. Its sentence was accordingly passed: it was dismantled and taken down, and its materials sold.

Even in its present state, Oxnead is a touching spot: of the hall itself there remains only an inconsiderable portion, apparently the fragment of one wing, now in the occupation of a farmer; but around it still cluster, leafy and lofty, the trees of the former park. Detached, in solitude, stands an elegant gateway of three arches,—its mouldings overhung with wild plants, and mantled with ivy, whilst the idle road that passes under it now conducts to no courtly mansion. The marble fountains have been transported from the garden and decorate the grounds of the neighboring hall at Blickling, where,

in one of the fine apartments, is treasured also a relic from Caister. But by far the most affecting mementos of past greatness are to be seen in the parish church. This, small and simple in its proportions, bears on its exterior, tokens of the adornment which the piety of the former lords loved to bestow upon it; while within, in various stages of neglect and decay, are beautiful monuments to the Pastons. There, Sir Clement, the founder of the mansion, reclines in complete panoply, save his unhelmetted head. His hands are raised in prayer: the escutcheons of manifold quarterings are suspended around; and below, in her weeds of woe, kneels his disconsolate widow. Lady Katharine Paston is also there, wife of the third Sir William: she was a daughter of Bertie, Lord Lindsay, and died in 1636. Her virtues and her graces are commemorated on an elegant marble tomb, where copious stanzas invoke the aid of Niobe and the muses, and groups of allegorical figures mark the prevalent taste of the time. Daughters, also, and other members of the family have their mementos there in brass or on stone; some commemorated by effigies, and some recorded by inscriptions alone; but all have suffered much, and are but too likely to suffer more. There is now no representative of the Pastons to check the injury: the very name is extinct, or is only to be met with here and there, among the poorest in condition and lowest in degree.

From the time when Caister Castle fell into the hands of William Crow, it has been its fortune to pass in rapid succession from owner to owner. Roger Crow received it from William, and transmitted it to a nephew of the same name. From him, in 1725, it was carried by a female branch into the family of Bedingfield; and

MONUMENT OF SIR CLEMENT PASTON.

IN OXNEAD CHURCH.

thence, by alliance with Sir John Rous, of Darsham, in Suffolk, Dame Judith transferred it to the noble line of Stradbroke, from whom it went, by purchase, to Mr. Lyon of Gray's Inn, and was by him sold to Mr. Burton, timber-merchant, of Yarmouth. On the death of Mr. Burton, it descended to his son, and upon his death to his two sisters, who became joint-proprietors. Both these ladies married; but one alone had issue, and there the property at present rests.

To resume—the outline of the history of Caister Castle stands in brief, as follows:—Erected by Sir John Fastolfe between the years 1420 and 1440, it was his favorite residence, and continued during his life the seat of luxury and splendor and literature and religion. Bequeathed, at his decease in 1459, to the Pastons, its walls could boast of little tranquillity, and its new proprietors of scarcely more than a nominal ownership, so long as, now with open violence, and now with the more insidious attacks of the law, their too-powerful opponent, the Duke of Norfolk, thought fit to urge his claims to the property. On the death of the Duke, in 1475, succeeded a fresh but brief period of prosperity; for, only twenty-four years afterwards, the Pastons removing, fixed their residence at Oxnead, leaving Caister either altogether uninhabited, or in the hands of stewards or servants. In the two hundred and forty years that have since passed, its decline and consequent decay have known no intermission. But, as observed at the outset, man's destructive hand has been more active in producing this effect than the slow and noiseless touch of time; and, if respect be justly due to the monuments of former days,—to names, and scenes, and buildings, consecrated by imagination, by history, and the muse,—

it would be well that the same hand should now at length be extended to arrest the course of the evil it has caused.

Regarded in a higher point of view, a ruined castle presents to the eye a touching type of the vicissitudes allotted to mankind, and in the sketch here given of the different fates of this structure, may be traced but too apt a resemblance to human life.

" For such the destiny of all on earth,
" So flourishes and fades majestic man:
" Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth;
" And fostering gales awhile the nursling fan.
" Oh! smile, ye heavens serene—ye, mildews wan,
" Ye, blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime,
" Nor lessen of his life the little span—
" Borne on the swift, but silent wings of time,
" Old age comes on apace to ravage all the clime.—"

But, thanks be to God, the simile extends no farther!

THE END.

SLOMAN, Printer, King-Street, Yarmouth.